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Through the **Florida Catholic Advocacy Network (FLCAN)**, Catholic faithful in Florida's seven dioceses engage issues that are of concern to the Church. To become a member of the network, visit [www.flaccb.org](http://www.flaccb.org).

## THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN FLORIDA

### People and Places

- 2,053,607 Catholics
- 2 Archbishops, 11 Bishops
- 1,213 Priests, 654 Deacons
- 108 Brothers, 762 Sisters
- 7 Dioceses, 467 Parishes, 55 Missions

### Health Care

- 13 Acute Care Hospitals
- 4 Rehabilitation Hospitals
- 8 Nursing Homes
- 1 Hospice Organization

### Social Welfare Services

- 255,326 Unduplicated Clients Served
- 35,981 Family Economic Security Services
- 9,782 Housing Services
- 1,355,015 Food Security Services

### Education

- 3 Seminaries, 4 Universities
- 29,875 College Students
- 38 High Schools
- 24,747 High School Students
- 163 Elementary Schools
- 30 Stand-Alone Preschools
- 60,606 Pre-K to 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Students
- 6 Special Education Schools / 8 Special Education Programs
- 629 Special Education Students
- 7,882 Teachers/Administrators
- 110,821 Religious Education Students

Information based on *The Official Catholic Directory*, 2016 and reports from diocesan offices.

# FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

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## Public Policy Priorities

Regular Legislative Session  
March 7 - May 5, 2017

*The Gospel of Jesus Christ and the teachings of his Church guide the work of the Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops, which, through relationships with representatives and agencies of Florida government, analyzes the moral dimension of public policies, proclaims the sanctity of life and dignity of the human person, leads decision makers in reaching just solutions, and provides opportunities for Catholics in Florida to carry out their responsibility to participate in political life.*

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## Life

- Expanding services and funding for crisis pregnancy centers serving pregnant women and their children
- Ending the use of the death penalty in Florida
- Clarifying Florida's privacy clause to ensure that Florida's constitution does not provide greater rights to an abortion than the U.S. Constitution

*The true moral test of society is how the weakest and most vulnerable members are treated. If we do not protect the inalienable right to life of the unborn, the human family will make little progress dealing with the death penalty, poverty, euthanasia and other attacks on human life and dignity.*

## Education

- Expanding eligibility for Gardiner Scholarship Accounts by allowing students to participate until age 26 and including dyslexia and dysgraphia
- Restoring per-student scholarships in the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Program to 2007-2008 school year levels
- Removing the requirement for attendance in public school the year prior (for kindergarten to 5th grade) under the McKay Scholarship Program for Students with Disabilities
- Upholding reasonable accountability by recognition of established state, regional and national accrediting agencies

*The Church supports the rights of parents to select the schools they deem best suited for their children, especially the poor and disabled, to receive federal and state services necessary to achieve academically and socially.*

## Health Care

- Providing health coverage for the uninsured especially those who are most economically and socially vulnerable
- Promoting ethical and appropriate palliative and end-of-life health care policies
- Opposing euthanasia and all forms of assisted suicide
- Promoting expansion of community-based mental health and substance abuse services

*As a basic human right necessary for a healthy and just society, we support ensuring accessible, quality health care for all. Our health delivery systems must be rooted in values that respect life, acknowledge human dignity and respond to the needs of the poor and vulnerable.*

## Family and Social Concerns

- Ensuring the freedom to serve the public in accord with moral or religious beliefs concerning the sanctity of life and marriage
- Improving juvenile justice policies by treating minors according to their cognitive abilities and making the most of their capacity to reform their lives
- Increasing protections of poor and vulnerable families and individuals by capping the APR for payday lenders and supporting a living wage
- Directing affordable housing trust fund dollars as intended for state and local housing programs and partnerships
- Supporting policies that enhance stewardship of the environment
- Defeating human trafficking by protecting survivors of forced commercial sex or labor and punishing those who benefit from the exploitation of vulnerable human beings
- Supporting efforts for comprehensive, positive immigration reforms at the federal level
- Opposing expansion of casino gambling in Florida

*As the family goes, so goes the nation and so goes the whole world in which we live. Human dignity is first recognized and understood within the context of the family. All persons have certain basic rights, and society has a moral obligation to ensure no one is denied that which is necessary to live with dignity.*