



FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

The nonpartisan public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Florida

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Statement on the Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children

January 22, 2025

Informed by the divinely revealed truth that the human being is made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 2:26-27), as Christians we care for all of God's children, especially the most vulnerable among us. On this Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children, we renew our call to pray and work for a culture that protects life in the womb and offers loving support to all mothers, fathers, and families.

Florida celebrated two major milestones over the past year. First, the Florida Supreme Court reversed the finding in the 1989 legal case, *In Re: TW*, that bent the state constitution's right to privacy to include a broad right to abortion. We celebrate the overturning of this longstanding wrong in Florida jurisprudence. This ruling paved the way for the Heartbeat Protection Act, which restricts the intentional taking of the life of an unborn child at 6 weeks of gestation, to go into effect.

Second, in the November election, Amendment 4 was defeated. This proposed amendment to Florida's constitution was pushed by a well-funded effort spreading misinformation about women's healthcare and current abortion law. If passed, it would have removed nearly all regulation of abortion up to viability and well beyond.

The Church in Florida made a considerable effort to help defeat Amendment 4, and we thank the many people of goodwill who worked in defense of the innocent preborn. We are grateful that voters rejected this amendment, but we also recognize that many of our fellow citizens voted in its favor and that much work remains. While the Heartbeat Protection Act has significantly decreased the number of abortions, the unfortunate reality is that abortions continue to be performed in Florida at a high rate.

Most of the important work in building a culture of life is undertaken outside the legislature and the courts. We must advance protections for unborn children and their mothers by communicating with compassion the truth about abortion, respecting the rights and dignity of women, and continuing our commitment to the family. We laud the services performed by pregnancy care centers and ministries such as Walking with Moms in Need. These initiatives meet and accompany women in difficult situations who are often told that they have no choice but to seek abortion and provide them with love, dignity, and practical resources.

We give thanks to those who have embraced the calling to marriage and family life and witness to us generously, as well as to those who help to prepare and support husbands and wives living their vocations. New life is welcomed in marriage and nourished in the family. This helps each child and ultimately all of society to flourish. As St. John Paul II famously noted, "In the face of the so-called culture of death, the family is the heart of the culture of life." (*Centessimus Annus*, no. 39, May 1, 1991)

Despite challenges, we remain confident in the Lord Jesus, who draws close to all those who suffer. With prayer and fasting, through the intercession of Mary, we ask Jesus to have mercy on our state and our nation and to bring about laws that protect every human life and banish every form of injustice. To all who have experienced the harm of abortion, there is always mercy and forgiveness in Jesus Christ. We invite all people to join in building a civilization of love in which every human being is valued and loved.

Most Rev. Thomas G. Wenski
Archdiocese of Miami

Most Rev. Gerald M. Barbarito
Diocese of Palm Beach

Most Rev. Frank J. Dewane
Diocese of Venice

Most Rev. John G. Noonan
Diocese of Orlando

Most Rev. Gregory L. Parkes
Diocese of St. Petersburg

Most Rev. William A. Wack, C.S.C.
Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee

Most Rev. Erik T. Pohlmeier
Diocese of St. Augustine

Most Rev. Enrique E. Delgado
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