



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, 2024**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Our fidelity to Christ calls us to uphold and protect the inviolable dignity and sanctity of all human life from the moment of conception until natural death. Great progress has been made in recent years to protect women and their preborn children in Florida. That progress, as noted below, is at great risk.

We are encouraged that our state's 15-week abortion limit remains in effect as the Florida Supreme Court considers a challenge to it. The legislature's passage of a bill to further limit abortion to six-weeks of gestation during the 2023 session and its approval by Governor DeSantis is a momentous achievement. This legislation also increases resources to pregnant women and young families through the Florida Pregnancy Care Network almost six-fold. If the 15-week law is upheld, the further limit to six weeks will go into effect thirty days later, ushering in a new era. Much remains to be done to properly recognize the dignity of the child in the womb, but this marks tremendous progress in the legal protection of preborn children in Florida.

This progress, as well as gains made over the past several decades to protect women and their preborn children from the harms of abortion, is at significant risk. An extreme ballot initiative proposing to amend our state constitution to legalize full-term abortion is of grave concern. If ultimately passed, the amendment would legalize abortion up until birth, including when the baby is capable of feeling pain. While the proposed amendment permits parental notification, the amendment would eliminate the current law requiring parental consent for a minor daughter to receive an abortion.

As is required of the petition initiative process, the proposed ballot language is under review by the Florida Supreme Court. In our briefs to the Court, we contend that the ballot title and summary are misleading, which should preclude its placement on the ballot. The title states the amendment "limits" government interference with abortion when the amendment actually prohibits all regulation before viability. Neither does the language provide fair notice of its impact on existing statutory protections for women. If this extreme amendment ultimately appears on the November 2024 ballot, we urge all Floridians to "vote no."

A healthy society can only continue to flourish if based on a consistent recognition of the rights of each individual, especially the weakest and most defenseless. With this in mind, we remain committed to pursuing full legal protection of preborn children and continue to support efforts to offer practical assistance and accompaniment to women and their families experiencing difficulties during pregnancy and beyond. We invite all people of good will to join us in these endeavors.

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
Archdiocese of Miami

ERIC METAXAS

575 MADISON AVENUE, 10TH FLOOR, NEW YORK, NY 10022

Dear Florida Pastor,

"Silence in the face of evil is itself evil. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act. God will not hold us guiltless."

Those haunting words are often associated with Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the great German pastor and martyr, and I wrote my recent book ***LETTER TO THE AMERICAN CHURCH*** to reveal the inescapable and shocking similarities between today's American Church and the German Church of the 1930s.

Now, I've written this letter to you, as a desperate and heartfelt call to action on behalf of the most vulnerable and victimized people group in the Sunshine State, so they can live to see the light of day.

What is the crisis in your state?

- Last year [82,581 preborn lives were terminated](#) in Florida – a 14-year high!
- With 33,010 abortions reported in the first four months of 2023, Florida is currently on pace to surpass 99,000 preborn lives terminated this year.
- These tragic numbers add to the almost 4 million preborn lives destroyed since 1973 in Florida.

So, when I became aware of the [Human Life Protection Amendment](#) effort underway in Florida to recognize the God-given right to life of every preborn child, I immediately provided a statement of support for this life-affirming petition initiative.

Since then, the situation in your state has become even more dire, and the need for this proposed amendment to the Florida Constitution even greater.

Not surprisingly, after your Governor signed a *Heartbeat Protection Act* into law, an opposing group began fighting back with an effort of their own to "put abortion on the ballot".

Referring to themselves as *Floridians Protecting Freedom*, this well-funded organization began circulating a petition in early May for their proposed amendment that would nullify the *Heartbeat Protection Act*, and sentence millions more to death in the decades to come.

If this group is successful, the killing of preborn children would become a constitutional "right" for any reason up to the point of viability, currently around 24 weeks gestation. Their proposed amendment would also allow for the termination of these precious lives through the third trimester, up to the point of birth "when necessary to protect the patient's health, as determined by the patient's healthcare provider."

But you as a pastor can help defeat these evil plans, and potentially even build an enduring constitutional wall of protection around these voiceless victims.

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Time is of the essence, so I urge you to go to HumanLifeFL.com/churches today to see how your church can lock arms with the Human Life Protection Amendment team, and speak and act for those who cannot do so for themselves.

In my most recent book I effectively ask whether it can be God's will that His children in the American Church be silent now, any more than it was His will they be silent as the Nazis rose to power.

The Church has an irreplaceable role in the culture of a nation. Bonhoeffer made that case clearly to the German church leaders of his day, calling the Church "the conscience of the nation." But as we know, they did not heed his warning. **And today – as then – it is our duty as Christians to live out our faith, and to fight the powers of darkness, especially on behalf of the weak and vulnerable.**

Silence is not an option. **God calls us to defend the preborn, and to boldly confront the lie that fighting evil is merely some "political" power play.** God calls His people to do much, but there can be no question that at the top of the list is for us to stand against the evil forces that have killed almost 4 million precious preborn children in Florida since 1973.

Confident that this is His fight, the Church must boldly overcome fear and the lies that would tempt us to inaction. And we must enter the fray, armed with the spiritual weapons of prayer, self-sacrifice, and love.

Now is the time to speak and act. Will you?

Please visit HumanLifeFL.com/churches today.

God bless you!

Eric Metaxas



ERIC METAXAS

Author of New York Times #1 Bestseller
Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy

EricMetaxas.com

