

## **NO on Amendment 4**

Ave Maria Catholic Church. September 27-28, 2024. Fr. David M Vidal

In this coming election, Floridians will decide whether to accept or reject six constitutional amendments. Voting is a right, but it is also a grave responsibility. Our lives and the lives of millions of Americans are at stake. We need to inform ourselves and learn what is proposed. We must also illustrate and educate our consciences to make a good choice.

### **We need to pay special attention to Amendment 4.**

Amendment 4 intends to enshrine in the Constitution of the State of Florida the “right to abortion” by prohibiting any rejection or restriction of abortions in the State of Florida. It is our responsibility to illustrate and educate our consciences and understand why we must vote “NO” to this Constitutional Amendment.

How are we to enshrine in the Constitution of Florida the “right to abortion” when the “right to life” is already enshrined in the law of creation and the human heart?

No human law or constitution should abrogate the most basic right of any human person: the right to life. Do we care about giving food and drink to those in need? Excellent! But to eat and drink, first, we must allow the person to live. Do we care about the orderly and dignified migration of people? Wonderful! But to move from one place to another, people must be alive first. Do we care about freedom of speech and the right to vote? Fantastic! But if the life of the person is taken away, freedom of expression also goes away.

Why is the right to life so fundamental? The right to life is the most basic and fundamental right because, without life, we cannot enjoy any other right. Without life, we cannot enjoy the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, the right to marry and have a family, and the right to freedom of thought and religion. Without life, all our other rights are taken away from us.

The *Catholic Church* proclaims that “*Human life is sacred, and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching*” (USCCB).

### **Where does the life of a human being start?**

Let us do some research. With the discovery of the human ovum in 1827, scientists understood that the union of sperm and egg at conception produces a new living being distinct from both mother and father. Modern genetics demonstrated that this individual is, at the outset, distinctively human, with the inherent and active potential to mature into a human embryo, infant, child, and adult.

It is very significant that in 1871, the American Medical Association, in the *Report on Criminal Abortion*, determined that “no other doctrine appears to be consonant with reason or physiology but that which admits the embryo to possess vitality from the very moment of conception.” And this life is human life.

Modern science has not changed the Church's constant teaching against abortion but has emphasized how important and reasonable it is by confirming that the life of each individual of the human species begins with the earliest embryo.

Human life begins at conception, and since conception, each human life must be treated with the respect due to a human person. This moral norm must be defended not only by Catholics but by every human being.

### **Where are we as a society? Where are we as a nation? Where are we as Floridians?**

We have worked so hard to defend the dignity of human beings and our freedom. We have worked so hard to reject unjust discrimination. How are we going to give up on the most fundamental gift of all, which is the sacredness of human life from conception to natural death?

A society that allows the killing of the unborn has no moral boundaries.

If a society permits the killing of an innocent child in the womb of a mother simply because the child is not desired, why would that same society not allow the killing of young or adult people who are considered inconvenient for others? Why would it not be permissible to kill those who do not think the same way as the rest of that society? If a society allows killing an innocent child in the mother's womb, the time will come when everything else will be permissible.

### **Let us put the “right to abortion” in perspective.**

Since 1973, when the U.S. Supreme Court forced states to legalize abortion on demand, more than 65 million unborn babies have been killed in abortions. Today, nearly 1.5 million are aborted annually, making abortion the number one killer of human lives in America.

Every day, according to the statistics, 4,000 innocent unborn children made in God's image and likeness lose their lives in our great nation. Sadly, only a very small percentage of Catholics do anything to prevent the slaughter.

We should hear and keep in mind the wise words of St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, the champion of the poor: “*We cannot fight credibly against other social and moral evils, including poverty and violence, while we tolerate mass killings by abortion.*”

It is imperative for us to pay attention to St. John Paul II, who reminds us: *“Above all, the common outcry, which is justly made on behalf of human rights -- for example, the right to health, to home, to work, to family, to culture -- is false and illusory if the right to life, the most basic and fundamental right and the condition for all other personal rights, is not defended with maximum determination.”*

Saint Paul says: *“Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel,”* (1 Cor 9:16). We should feel the same way. Woe to us if we do not accept the Gospel of Life and treasure it in our hearts! Woe to us if we do not preach the Gospel of Life!

If all the scientific discoveries have not been sufficient to illustrate our consciences to understand that life starts at conception, at least let us ask ourselves what we celebrate on March 25 on the Feast of the Annunciation. Do we not celebrate the words of the Archangel Gabriel, the “yes” of Mary, and the fact that the “Word was made flesh and dwelt among us”? Why do we treasure that moment? Because at that moment, God dwelt among us! Because Mary became the first living tabernacle of our Lord Jesus, true God, and true man!

Do we Catholics not also celebrate Mary's visitation to her cousin Elizabeth? Yes, we do. We enjoy reading how the baby John the Baptist, in his six months of gestation, leaped for joy at the presence of the baby Jesus, who was just conceived in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Should we remove those passages from the gospels?

It is our responsibility to illustrate and educate our consciences and understand why we must vote “NO” to Constitutional Amendment 4 in this coming election. Our spiritual life and the physical lives of millions of Americans are at stake.