



# DIOCESE OF ST. AUGUSTINE

Office of Communications

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## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

**DATE: May 6, 2024**  
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### **Choosing Life – Bishop Erik Pohlmeier on Florida's Heartbeat Act and Amendment 4**

As the spiritual leader of the Catholic Diocese of St. Augustine, I want to reflect on some recent developments regarding the Florida Heartbeat Protection Act and the upcoming abortion amendment.

The Florida Heartbeat Protection Act went into effect on Wednesday, May 1, marking a significant milestone in Florida's efforts to protect the lives of unborn babies. This law underscores the intrinsic value of every human life, from the moment of conception, and affirms the sanctity of life as a foundational principle of our society.

Contrary to certain narratives in the media, the Florida Heartbeat Protection Act does not disregard the well-being of women. Rather, it recognizes that supporting women begins from the moment of conception and continues throughout their pregnancy ensuring that the child is allowed to thrive and fulfill their potential.

At the same time, it's crucial to acknowledge the complex and often challenging situations that women and their families may find themselves in when facing an unexpected or difficult pregnancy. Our hearts go out to those who are navigating such circumstances, and our response as a community must be one of compassion and ongoing support.

The Catholic faith community is committed to supporting initiatives that promote life and offer practical assistance to those in need. Crisis pregnancy centers play a vital role in providing compassionate care, resources and guidance to individuals and families facing pregnancy-related challenges. We stand in solidarity with these centers and their dedicated volunteers who work tirelessly to support members of our community during such vulnerable times.

As discussions continue regarding the Abortion Amendment, slated for the November general election ballot, it is essential to approach this issue with empathy and understanding. The Diocese of St. Augustine, in collaboration with the Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops (FCCB) and other agencies, is working diligently to educate and mobilize our community in a manner that upholds human dignity and promotes a culture of life.

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In the coming weeks, our diocese will be conducting training sessions to equip individuals with the necessary tools to engage meaningfully in this critical dialogue. We invite every member of the community to join us in advocating for life-affirming measures and providing support to those in need. Voters must examine the reality of Amendment 4 and study its language carefully as many voices compete for your attention. Please look at the information already available by visiting <https://www.flaccb.org/abortion-amendment>. More information and resources will be added to this site in the coming weeks.

I urge everyone to approach this issue with empathy and sensitivity, recognizing the diverse experiences and challenges that individuals and families may face. Let us stand together in prayer for the protection of every life and for the strength to foster a society where every person is valued and supported.

In Christ,  
Most Rev. Bishop Erik T. Pohlmeier  
Bishop of St. Augustine

*The Diocese of St. Augustine encompasses 17 counties of Northeastern and Northcentral Florida with 71 Catholic parishes, mission churches and chapels, serving more than 153,000 registered Catholics. The diocese was formally established on March 11, 1870, but has served the people of Florida since 1565.*