

FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

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MICHAEL B. SHEEDY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



March 31, 2023

The Honorable Ron DeSantis
Governor of Florida
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Re: Please stay execution of Louis Gaskin and commute his death sentence

Dear Governor DeSantis:

As the scheduled execution of Louis Gaskin approaches, we write to ask you to grant a stay and commute his sentence to life without parole.

Mr. Gaskin was convicted of and sentenced to death for the 1989 murders of Georgette and Robert Sturmfels, in Palm Coast, Florida. His violent actions tragically ended the lives of this married couple and have caused immense suffering to the victims' families, loved ones and communities.

However, taking the life of Mr. Gaskin will not restore the victims' lives. Rather, premeditated, state-sanctioned killing disrespects for the sacredness of all human life and perpetuates the cycle of violence and vengeance. Intentionally ending Mr. Gaskin's life is unnecessary. The alternative to the death penalty of life-long incarceration without parole is a very severe punishment which keeps society safe.

It is also troubling to note the mitigating circumstances of Mr. Gaskin's case that prompted four jurors to recommend a life sentence without parole. It seems that he suffered from an extreme mental or emotional disturbance at the time of his crimes. He also suffered from a severely deprived childhood. His teenage mother was addicted to drugs, and he endured neglect and sexual abuse at the hands of other family members. Neuroscientific research shows that such traumatic experiences can have lasting effects on a child's developing brain, which can profoundly affect behavior.

Please know that in staying Mr. Gaskin's execution and commuting his sentence, you would have our support and that of the many Floridians who support alternatives to the death penalty. Floridians around the state will soon be gathering in prayer for Mr. and Mrs. Sturmfels, and all who have been harmed by Mr. Gaskin's actions, for him, for everyone affected by violent crime, and for an end to the use of the death penalty.

We also pray for you as you consider this request.

Sincerely,

Michael B. Sheedy

Cc: Archbishop and Bishops of Florida
Christie C. Arnold, Associate for Respect Life & Social Concerns

***ARCHDIOCESE OF MIAMI - DIOCESE OF ST. AUGUSTINE - DIOCESE OF ST. PETERSBURG - DIOCESE OF ORLANDO
DIOCESE OF PENSACOLA-TALLAHASSEE - DIOCESE OF PALM BEACH - DIOCESE OF VENICE***