

FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

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MICHAEL B. SHEEDY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



October 1, 2025

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

Re: Please stay the execution of Samuel Smithers and commute his sentences

Dear Governor DeSantis:

We write to ask you to grant a stay of the execution of Samuel Smithers and to commute his sentences to life without parole.

Mr. Smithers was convicted of and sentenced to death for the first-degree murders of Cristy Cowan and Denise Roach in 1996. We mourn the tragic deaths of Ms. Cowan and Ms. Roach, and we feel sorrow for the terrible suffering their loved ones have had to live with ever since. May they find comfort in God. Indeed, the Church remains available to assist them with pastoral care.

Mr. Smithers' crimes were heinous, and it is right that the state should punish them severely. Nevertheless, even as we pray for the repose of the souls of the victims and for the consolation of their survivors, we ask that you spare Mr. Smithers' life. Every human life, given by God, is sacred.

The death penalty is unnecessary. There is a way to punish without ending another human life: life-long incarceration without the possibility of parole. It is a severe yet more humane punishment that ensures societal safety, offers finality to court processes much more quickly than a death sentence, and allows the guilty the possibility of repentance.

We appeal to you that it is possible both to achieve the purposes of punishment and to exercise mercy. We can entrust the final judgment of every individual to God. We pray for the repose of the souls of Ms. Cowan and Ms. Roach and for the consolation of their loved ones. We pray for you, too, as you consider this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Michael B. Sheedy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michael" being more prominent.

Michael B. Sheedy

cc: Jason Weida, Esq., Chief of Staff, Executive Office of the Governor
Catholic Bishops of Florida