

# FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

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MICHAEL B. SHEEDY  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



July 8, 2025

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

## ***RE: Request to Pause Signing of Death Warrants and Engage in Further Dialogue***

Dear Governor DeSantis:

We call on you to pause the signing of death warrants. We request further dialogue as to whether the people of the State of Florida are being well served by executions, which have increased significantly this year.

Our concern for executions is grounded in the conviction, discernible from natural law and confirmed by God's revelation, that every human life has a sacred value. This value exists by virtue of each human being's status as a creature made in God's own image and likeness and his or her high vocation to participate in God's own eternal life. Importantly, this value is not derived from any act by the individual, nor is it created by government. We note also that this value is the source of rights and the precondition for justice. It is also historically the prerequisite behind the constitutions of our state and nation.

In some contexts, it may have been the case that there was no way to preserve the common good or to protect the innocent other than to implement capital punishment. In Florida, that is certainly not the case. We do have the ability to protect society without killing human beings. Our demonstrated capacity to imprison offenders for life means that every execution is a discretionary killing. Given the unique value of human life, the state should refrain from opting to kill.

With hopes for further dialogue, we highlight that these points are crystallized in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church's* treatment of the death penalty (#2267):

Recourse to the death penalty on the part of legitimate authority, following a fair trial, was long considered an appropriate response to the gravity of certain crimes and an acceptable, albeit extreme, means of safeguarding the common good.

Today, however, there is an increasing awareness that the dignity of the person is not lost even after the commission of very serious crimes. In addition, a new understanding has emerged of the significance of penal sanctions imposed by the state. Lastly, more effective systems of detention have been developed, which ensure the due protection of citizens but, at the same time, do not definitively deprive the guilty of the possibility of redemption.

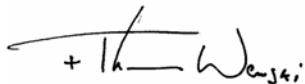
Consequently, the Church teaches, in the light of the Gospel, that "the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person", and she works with determination for its abolition worldwide.

Our opposition to the death penalty does not entail a lack of support for law and order. While many of those who have been sentenced to death and have been executed would clearly have benefited from a stronger safety net earlier in their lives, we do not have an unhealthy sympathy for lawbreakers.

Nor do we have a callous disregard for victims of crime. When life sentences without parole are handed down, surviving family members are not required to revisit the painful details repeatedly over decades in the necessary appeals process. As a result, they often progress in the healing process sooner when a life sentence is administered. They avoid the mistaken belief that their own healing and closure are tied up in seeing the guilty party executed.

We simply propose that there is a better way to achieve the ends of justice. Please stop signing of new death warrants. We request a meeting to more deeply review with you the teachings of our Church on the sanctity of human life and the common good.

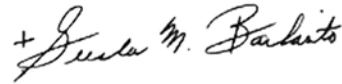
Sincerely in Christ,



Most Rev. Thomas G. Wenski  
Archbishop of Miami



Most Rev. Frank J. Dewane  
Bishop of Venice



Most Rev. Gerald M. Barbarito  
Bishop of Palm Beach



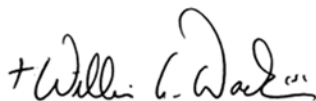
Most Rev. John G. Noonan  
Bishop of Orlando



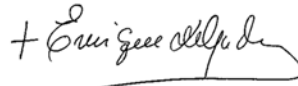
Most Rev. Gregory L. Parkes  
Bishop of St. Petersburg



Most Rev. Erik T. Pohlmeier  
Bishop of St. Augustine



Most Rev. William A. Wack CSC  
Bishop of Pensacola-Tallahassee



Most Rev. Enrique Delgado  
Auxiliary Bishop of Miami

cc: Michael B. Sheedy