



Catholic Bishops Urge Governor To Stay Two January Executions

January 19, 2006

We, the Catholic Bishops of Florida, are disheartened about the scheduling of two executions in one month, and together we implore Governor Bush to reconsider the State sanctioned killing of Clarence Hill and Arthur Dennis Rutherford.

Reflecting on the continuous exposure to violence in society, which hardens the hearts and minds of even our youngest members, we reiterate our plea for respect for life, even for those who are guilty of violence.

Along with our brother bishops throughout the country, we have launched a national campaign to end the use of the death penalty. There is increasing concern about its use and what it does to us as a people and a nation. We perceive growing doubts about the fairness and effectiveness of the death penalty. We sense a change in public attitudes and see signs that many people are reexamining and reconsidering their past support for it. Given the ability of the State to protect society from further harm by life in prison without possibility of parole, our faith teaches us that execution of offenders should be "practically non-existent".

We express our sympathy to the families of Stephen Taylor and Stella Salamon, who have experienced the loss of their loved ones. We pray for them in their incomprehensible loss and their search for justice. But we feel strongly that their pain and loss of life cannot be wiped away by another death. Standing with families of victims does not compel us to support the death penalty. We strongly object to the execution of these men in the name of the citizens of this state.

Governor Bush, please stay these executions and commute these sentences to life in prison without possibility of parole.

Archbishop John C. Favalora
Archdiocese of Miami

Bishop John J. Nevins
Diocese of Venice

Bishop John H. Ricard, SSJ
Diocese of Pensacola/Tallahassee

Bishop Robert N. Lynch
Diocese of St. Petersburg

Bishop Victor Galeone
Diocese of St. Augustine

Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito, JCL
Diocese of Palm Beach

Bishop Thomas G. Wenski
Diocese of Orlando

Auxiliary Bishop Felipe J. Estévez
Archdiocese of Miami

Auxiliary Bishop John G. Noonan
Archdiocese of Miami