

Catholic Bishops: Neither Retribution Nor Deterrence Justify Death Penalty

Governor Crist, the Catholic Bishops of Florida are dismayed by your recent decision to execute John Richard Marek on May 13, 2009. This death warrant was signed in spite of an appeal by the Florida public defenders to declare a moratorium on executions. While we oppose the use of the death penalty because we believe in the sanctity of all human life, even those who have done great harm, we appreciate the reasoning behind the public defenders' proposal, specifically the exorbitant costs of execution in these financially difficult times.

We express our genuine sympathy for the victim, Adella Marie Simmons, and her loved ones. We do not believe the state-sanctioned killing of John Marek will lessen their pain but instead will force them to re-live the anguish experienced at the time the crime was committed.

Neither retribution nor deterrence can justify the death penalty. Society needs to be protected from criminals, and we have that ability by sentencing offenders to life in prison without possibility of parole.

Governor, many states are reconsidering their use of the death penalty as the solution to punish those guilty of heinous crimes. We implore you to commute Mr. Marek's sentence to life in prison without possibility of parole and reconsider your decision to continue executions in Florida.

Archbishop John C. Favalora
Archdiocese of Miami

Bishop Victor Galeone
Diocese of St. Augustine

Bishop Robert N. Lynch
Diocese of St. Petersburg

Bishop Thomas G. Wenski
Diocese of Orlando

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

Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito
Diocese of Palm Beach

Bishop Frank J. Dewane
Diocese of Venice

Auxiliary Bishop Felipe J. Estevez
Archdiocese of Miami

Auxiliary Bishop John G. Noonan
Archdiocese of Miami

May 11, 2009

Note: On May 11, the Florida Supreme Court issued an indefinite stay of execution for John Marek who was scheduled to be put to death on Wednesday, May 13, 2009.