



## FLORIDA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Tuesday, August 23, 2011**

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### **Catholic Bishops of Florida Ask Governor Scott to Spare the Life of Manuel Valle**

**Tallahassee, FL** – In an August 3, 2011 letter to Governor Rick Scott, the bishops of Florida urged the governor to stay the execution of Manuel Valle scheduled for September 1, 2011. Non-lethal means of punishment protect society and respect the life of all persons, even those who have done great harm. Text of the letter follows:

Dear Governor Scott,

We renew our appeal to you to end the use of the death penalty in our state. We urge you to stay the execution of Manuel Valle scheduled for September 1, 2011.

We concede the right of the State to impose the death penalty when absolutely necessary, that is when it is otherwise impossible to defend society. However, given the ability of Florida to protect its residents by incarcerating inmates for life without possibility of parole, we pray you will exercise that option.

Willful murder is a heinous crime; it cries to God for justice. Yet, God did not require Cain's life for having spilt Abel's blood. While God certainly punished history's first murderer, he nevertheless put a mark on him to protect Cain from those wishing to kill him to avenge Abel's murder (cf. Genesis 4:15). Like Cain, the condemned prisoner on death row – for all the evil of his crimes – remains a person. Human dignity – that of the convicted as well as our own – is best served by not resorting to this extreme and unnecessary punishment. Modern society has the means to protect itself without the death penalty.

The killing of Officer Louis Pena caused great suffering and pain for his family and friends, and we pray they were consoled as they mourned the loss of their loved one. We are hopeful that Officer Gary Spell and his family are healed from his traumatic experience as he came to the aid of his fellow officer. An execution re-opens the emotional wounds of victim's families and does not bring back or honor their loved one. True peace can only be achieved by forgiveness.

Killing someone because they killed diminishes respect for life and promotes a culture of violence and vengeance. We affirm the right and duty of the State to assure public safety and punish the guilty by incarceration, which allows the inmate an opportunity for reflection on their offenses and sorrow for the pain they have caused others.

Governor, we ask you to stop state sanctioned killing by sparing the life of Manuel Valle, allowing him to serve out his sentence in prison for the rest of his natural life.

Respectfully in the Lord,

Most Reverend Thomas G. Wenski  
Archdiocese of Miami

Most Reverend Robert N. Lynch  
Diocese of St. Petersburg

Most Reverend John G. Noonan  
Diocese of Orlando

Most Reverend Gerald M. Barbarito  
Diocese of Palm Beach

Most Reverend Frank J. Dewane  
Diocese of Venice

Most Reverend Felipe J. Estévez  
Diocese of St. Augustine

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