FLORIDA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE
Advocating Life, Dignity and the Common Good Since 1969
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Catholic Bishops: Florida Should Reject State Sanctioned Killing

October 11, 2012

We the Catholic Bishops of Florida affirm the dignity of every person, both victims and offenders. We reject state sanctioned killing and ask the State of Florida to join the growing number of states who have rejected execution and enacted the option of life in prison without possibility of parole.

After 34 years on death row, John Errol Ferguson, age 64, is scheduled for execution on October 16th despite pleas for his life based on mental health issues and a troubled home life including a gun head injury as a youth. May God have mercy on his soul.

We offer our sincere sympathy to the families of the multiple victims who suffered from Mr. Ferguson's actions and pray they have received comfort and healing in their time of need. All people are made in the image and likeness of God, even those who have done great harm. Given the ability of the modern penal system to protect society and growing moral aversion to the death penalty, justice and punishment can be achieved by incarcerating offenders for life.

As a sign of solidarity with all those around the state in prayer during the time of the execution, Most Reverend Felipe Estévez, Bishop of St. Augustine, will preside at a one hour prayer vigil on October 16th, 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at the Cathedral-Basilica of St. Augustine, 38 Cathedral Place, St. Augustine, Florida.

Most Reverend Thomas G. Wenski
Archdiocese of Miami

Most Reverend Gerald M. Barbarito
Diocese of Palm Beach

Most Reverend Robert N. Lynch
Diocese of St. Petersburg

Most Reverend Frank J. Dewane
Diocese of Venice

Most Reverend John G. Noonan
Diocese of Orlando

Most Reverend Felipe J. Estévez
Diocese of St. Augustine

Most Reverend Gregory L. Parkes
Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee