



Catholic Bishops of Florida Urge Mercy for Richard Henyard Implore Governor Crist to End Executions

Tallahassee - Governor Crist, the bishops of Florida continue to plead for an end to the use of the death penalty in our state. The September 23 execution of Richard Henyard will be another example of our failure to recognize the inherent dignity of every human being, even those guilty of horrible crimes.

While the untimely deaths of the two young victims and serious injury to their mother cry out for justice, we are reminded that executions diminish us as a civil society and perpetuate a culture of death instead of a culture of life that acknowledges all are created in God's image. The details of this crime, including the culpability of the accomplice and the young age of Mr. Henyard at the time of the crime, are enough reason to question the inconsistencies in sentencing in Florida, a point made by the Florida Death Penalty Assessment Team in 2006.

Life in prison without possibility of parole is severe punishment for offenders. While the Church acknowledges that society has a right to execute violent transgressors, the ability of the modern penal system to protect society makes the need for the death penalty very rare, if not practically nonexistent.

We pray for and grieve with Dorothy Lewis who lost her daughters, Jasmine and Jamilya, as the result of this crime. No one can truly comprehend the unimaginable loss of two young children.

Governor Crist, we ask you to spare the life of Richard Henyard. Killing another human being perpetuates violence in our society. We must respect all life, even those who have done great wrong.

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