



Florida Catholic Conference

The nonpartisan public policy voice of the Catholic Bishops of Florida

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Bishops Say Society Needs Forgiveness Not Vengeance

The Bishops of Florida appeal to you, Governor Scott, to stop the cycle of violence that is fueled by the desire for vengeance and commute the sentence of Oba Chandler, scheduled for execution on November 15, to life in prison without possibility of parole. All of us feel deep sorrow for the horrific loss experienced by the Rogers family who tragically lost Joan, Michelle and Christe in a terrifying killing. Sadly, in ours and a handful of foreign countries, we resort to purposely killing a human being as retribution.

Some crimes are so serious and heinous that many would consider it unjust for the perpetrator to receive any sentence other than death as the ultimate punishment. We join all citizens in crying for justice. But justice can be done without inflicting more killing. The Gospel message of reconciliation requires charity toward all who are our brothers and sisters in Christ no matter the transgression. The death penalty contributes to the devaluation of human life and promotes the culture of death. Forgiveness, not revenge, is the better path to healing for victims and their families.

Justice can be satisfied without taking life as reflected in Chapter 33, verse 11 of the Book of Ezekiel: "As I live says the Lord God, I swear I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked man, but rather in the wicked man's conversion, that he may live." Governor, please keep Oba Chandler in prison for the rest of his life until natural death.

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Most Reverend Robert N. Lynch
Diocese of St. Petersburg

Most Reverend John G. Noonan
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Most Reverend Gerald M. Barbarito
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