



FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

The nonpartisan public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Florida

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Catholic bishops urge Governor DeSantis to spare the life of Edward James

TALLAHASSEE, FL – The Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops (FCCB) has implored Gov. Ron DeSantis to stay the execution of Edward James and commute his sentence to life without parole. James is scheduled to be executed on March 20 for the 1993 murders of Betty Dick and her eight-year-old granddaughter, Toni Neuner, in Seminole County, Florida.

In a letter to DeSantis from Michael Sheedy, FCCB executive director, the bishops mourn the victims' tragic deaths and the suffering caused by James' crimes, yet stress the need for society to recognize the intrinsic dignity and unalienable rights of every human life.

"It is better for the people of Florida to punish severely without themselves acting to kill a human being," Sheedy wrote. "Life imprisonment without the possibility of parole is still a severe punishment which also serves to protect society from further danger from Mr. James."

The Catholic Church teaches that all human life is sacred. Even people who have committed terrible acts and caused great harm possess a human dignity instilled by God, our Creator. The death penalty attacks the inviolability of the human person and perpetuates the cycle of violence that is prevalent in our culture. Given our modern penal system, executions are unnecessary. Life-long incarceration without the possibility of parole is a severe yet more humane punishment that ensures societal safety, allows the guilty the possibility of redemption, and offers closure for victims of crime and their families.

Before James' scheduled execution, Floridians will gather across the state to pray for him and his victims, for DeSantis as he considers the request to stay the execution, and for an end to the death penalty and the cycle of violence in society.

[Full text of letter to DeSantis](#)

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