



CATHOLIC BISHOPS URGE CLEMENCY FOR AILEEN WUORNOS

Tallahassee --- Again we appeal to Governor Bush to stay an execution, this time in the case of Aileen Wuornos, scheduled to die on October 9. While the many crimes committed by Ms. Wuornos are horrific, it is only when society cannot be protected in any other way that the death penalty is justified. We express our sincere sympathy to the families and friends of her victims who have been terribly wronged by these brutal murders. But we do not believe the added violence of her execution will relieve them of their pain.

Revenge feeds a climate of violence in our society and encourages a readiness to accept killing as a solution to many social problems. True peace is only made possible through forgiveness. Though our natural instinct is to pay back evil with evil, the sacredness of human life can never be forfeited by human misconduct. Aileen Wuornos may not be free of guilt, but her life remains sacred in the eyes of God.

Governor, we appeal to you to commute this sentence to life imprisonment and to begin a review of the entire question of the death penalty. The recurring question of innocence, the exorbitant cost, the inconsistency of sentencing and the capriciousness of who is executed, each calls for reexamination.

Let us all pray for peace and seek God's forgiveness, and implore the courage to forgive those who have trespassed against us.

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