

FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

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MICHAEL B. SHEEDY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



October 21, 2019

The Honorable Ron DeSantis
Governor
400 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Re: Please stay execution of James Dailey – veteran with evidence of innocence

Dear Governor DeSantis:

With great sadness, we learned that you have signed a third death warrant. While we urge you to stop every execution and end the use of the death penalty in Florida, this case of a veteran with evidence of innocence is especially alarming.

Florida leads the nation in death row exonerations. Florida makes more mistakes than any other state in sentencing innocent people to death. There is strong evidence that James Dailey's death sentence was yet another failure of justice. Another man, Jack Percy, has signed a sworn affidavit that he, and he alone, was responsible for the tragic death of 14-year-old Shelly Boggio. No physical evidence ties Mr. Dailey to the crime; however, the Florida Supreme Court refuses to allow him to present new evidence proving his factual innocence. The direct killing of the innocent is always wrong and an intrinsic evil.

As Pope Francis has stated, and as the *Catechism* has been updated to reflect, the death penalty is "inadmissible" due to modern penal systems. At certain times in history, the teachings of the Church did not exclude recourse to the death penalty when it was the only means by which to protect society and guilt was properly determined. Today, however, alternative sentences, such as life without parole, are severe punishments through which society can be kept safe. These alternatives do not degrade us by ending yet another life - perpetuating, rather than ending, a cycle of violence.

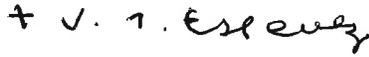
We are particularly concerned that, if carried out, this will be Florida's 100th execution since the reinstatement of the death penalty in 1976. Our state is a national outlier in our high numbers of death sentences, death row population, and executions. This use of the death penalty wounds our society by allowing a devaluation and coarseness of life in our community.

You have the support of the Church and the majority of voters in Florida who support alternatives to the death penalty in ending this cruel and unnecessary practice immediately. At dozens of prayer vigils throughout the state, Floridians will gather in prayer for Ms. Boggio's family, for Mr. Dailey, for everyone affected by violent crime, for an end to the use of the death penalty, and for you in your difficult position.

Sincerely,



Most Rev. Thomas G. Wenski
Archdiocese of Miami



Most Rev. Felipe J. Estévez, STD
Diocese of St. Augustine



Most Rev. Gerald M. Barbarito
Diocese of Palm Beach



Most Rev. John G. Noonan
Diocese of Orlando



Most Rev. Gregory L. Parkes
Diocese of St. Petersburg



Most Rev. Frank J. Dewane
Diocese of Venice



Most Rev. William A. Wack, C.S.C.
Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee



Most Rev. Enrique Delgado
Archdiocese of Miami