



FLORIDA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Florida Bishops' Conference urges Governor Scott to commute sentence of John Henry; community called to pray

Tallahassee (June 11, 2014) – The Florida Catholic Conference appeals to Governor Rick Scott to commute the sentence of John Henry to life in prison without the possibility of parole. Mr. Henry is scheduled to be executed at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 18, 2014, for the 1985 murders of his estranged wife, Suzanne Henry, and her son Eugene Christian. We join in prayer for them.

The Conference acknowledges the severity of the crimes for which Mr. Henry has been found guilty; however, taking his life is unnecessary and promotes revenge under the guise of justice. A life sentence without possibility of parole punishes the offender, allows for both repentance and forgiveness, and acknowledges that all human life is sacred. So long as society can be protected, a sentence of life, rather than a sentence of death, is the proper course of action.

Pope Francis reminds us of the capacity of people to repent and the need to rely on God's merciful judgment rather than on the human desire for revenge. The Holy Father stated in his 2014 World Day of Peace message, "...human beings can experience conversion; they must never despair of being able to change their lives. I wish this to be a message of hope and confidence for all, even for those who have committed brutal crimes, for God does not wish the death of the sinner, but that he converts and lives" (cf. *Ezekiel 18:23*).

Catholic faithful and members of the community are invited to gather in solidarity at the following times and locations to pray for the victims of violent crimes and their families, for persons on death row awaiting execution, and for the end to the use of the death penalty:

Archdiocese of Miami

A prayer vigil will be held following 11:45 a.m. Mass on Wednesday, June 18 at St. Martha Catholic Church, 9401 Biscayne Boulevard, Miami Shores. Contact: Juan Di Prado, (305) 762-1046, jdiprado@theadom.org.

Diocese of St. Augustine

Prayer vigils will be held on Wednesday, June 18 at the following locations:

- In front of the St. Augustine Beach City Hall at the corner of A1A and 16th Street, 5:15 - 6:15 p.m. Contact: Nancy O'Byrne, (904) 461-9216, obyernen@bellsouth.net.
- In front of the new Duval County Unified Courthouse, 501 W. Adams Street, Jacksonville, 4:30 - 5:30 p.m. Contact: Jackie Gunning, (904) 449-3328, jacqueline.gunning@bmcjax.com or Sr. Maureen Kelley at (904) 704-0313, mkelleyop@att.net.
- In front of the Flagler County Courthouse, 5:00-6:00 p.m., 1769 E. Moody Blvd, Bunnell. Contact: Jackie Morelewicz, (386) 986-3146, jackiem@cfl.rr.com.

A carpool will be leaving on Wednesday, June 18 at 4:30 p.m. from the parking lot of St. Augustine Church and Catholic Student Center, 1738 W. University Avenue, Gainesville to attend a prayer service at Florida State Prison. Contact: For driving directions, George Diller, (352) 332-9780 Michelle Garcia, (352) 372-3533, info@catholicgators.com.

Diocese of St. Petersburg

Spirit FM 90.5 WBVM Tampa will be praying on air Wednesday, June 18, beginning at 5:50 pm. Spirit FM is also available on the internet (www.spiritfm905.com).

Prayer time will be held at St. Vincent de Paul Church, 4843 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday, FL on Wednesday, June 18, at 5:30 p.m. Contact: Sabrina Burton Schultz, Diocese of St. Petersburg, (727) 344-1611, sab@dosp.org

Diocese of Orlando

A prayer service will be held at St. Margaret Mary Catholic Church, 526 North Park Avenue, Winter Park, FL on Tuesday, June 17, 2014 at 5:00 p.m.

A prayer service will be held at St. Patrick Catholic Church, 6803 Old Hwy 441 South, Mt. Dora on Wednesday, June 18 at 3:00 p.m.

A bus will be leaving from the parking lot of Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church, 201 University Blvd., Daytona Beach on June 18 at 2:30 p.m. for a prayer service outside of the prison in Starke at 6:00 p.m. Contact: Office of Advocacy and Justice, (407) 246-4819, advocacyjustice@orlandodiocese.org.

Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee

A holy hour will take place at Basilica of St. Michael the Archangel, 19 N. Palafox St., Pensacola, on Friday, June 13 at 11:00 a.m. (CST). Contact: (850) 438-4985.

A prayer service/holy hour will be held at St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church, 1008 Fortune Avenue, Panama City, on Tuesday, June 17 at 7:00 p.m. (CST). Contact: (850) 763-1821, stj.office@knology.net.

A prayer service/holy hour will be held at St. Mary Catholic Church, 110 St. Mary Ave SW, Fort Walton Beach, on Tuesday, June 17 at 6:00 p.m. (CST). Contact: (850) 243-3742.

A prayer service to end the use of the death penalty is held at Immaculate Conception parish, 2750 South Byron Butler Parkway, Perry, every Thursday afternoon at 3:00 p.m.

A prayer service will be held at Good Shepherd Catholic Church, 4665 Thomasville Rd, Tallahassee, on Tuesday, June 17 at 6:00 p.m. Contact: (850) 339-7847.

Additional Contact: Deacon Ray Aguado, Office of Advocacy and Justice, Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee, (850) 435-3531, aguador@ptdiocese.org.

Tallahassee Citizens Against the Death Penalty will sponsor an interfaith prayer vigil scheduled for Wednesday, June 18 at 6:00 p.m. in front of the Governor's Mansion in Tallahassee and a service of remembrance in the Capitol Building Plaza Level Rotunda the day after the execution, Thursday, June 19, at noon. Contact: Sheila Meehan, (850) 524-0080.

Diocese of Palm Beach

Catholic Charities Respect Life Office in partnership with the Diocese of Palm Beach and Pax Christi will host a prayer service on Wednesday, June 18 at 5:30 p.m. at the Cathedral of St. Ignatius Loyola, 9999 N. Military Trail, Palm Beach Gardens. The service will be followed by a procession and silent vigil in front of the Cathedral from 5:45 - 6:15 p.m. Contact: Dianne Laubert, (561) 313-2280, dlaubert@diocesepb.org.

Diocese of Venice

A prayer vigil will be held in the Chapel at St. Katharine Drexel Catholic Church, 1922 SW 20th Avenue, Cape Coral on Sunday, June 15, at 7:00 p.m. Contact: Maria (239) 540-7096 or maria1403@juno.com.

A prayer vigil will be held at St. John the Evangelist Church, 625 111th Avenue North, Naples on Wednesday, June 18 at 5:30 p.m.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church, 425 South Tamiami Trail, Osprey, will hold a prayer vigil on Wednesday, June 18 at 5:30 p.m. Contact: Parish office (941) 966-0807.

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The Florida Catholic Conference is an agency of the Catholic Bishops of Florida. The archbishop and bishops of the seven (arch)dioceses in Florida constitute its board of directors.