

FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

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MICHAEL B. SHEEDY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



January 5, 2016

The Honorable Rick Scott
Governor of Florida
Plaza Level 05, The Capitol
400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0001

Re: Stop Executions – Commute Sentence of Oscar Bolin to Life without Parole

Dear Governor Scott:

The Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops appeals to you again to stop executions in Florida. Please begin with Oscar Bolin, who is scheduled for execution this January 7. Commuting his sentence to life in prison without the possibility of parole remains a severe punishment and ensures that the public will be protected against crimes he might commit.

Our society is increasingly aware of the flaws in the application of the death penalty, which is inconsistent, arbitrary and too often applied in error. We note that last year, our nation marked a 25-year low in executions. Florida was one of only six states to carry out executions last year, and continues to lead the nation in the number of death row exonerations.

Your support of so many pro-life measures during your tenure as governor has encouraged us. We urge you to recognize that the life of each person has dignity and should be respected, even those who have done great harm. State-sponsored executions presume we can teach killing is wrong by killing; however, the taking of another life simply perpetuates a cycle of violence.

We join you and others in mourning the death of Teri Lynn Matthews and the other women for whose murders Mr. Bolin has been convicted: Natalie Blanche Holley and Stephanie Collins. We pray for them and for healing of their loved ones. However, killing Mr. Bolin in return will neither heal the pain of their losses nor restore the lives of these women.

It is time for us to abandon the illusion that we can protect life by taking life. We look forward to the day when our society chooses not to answer violence with violence whenever possible to protect ourselves. Again, please commute the sentence of Oscar Bolin to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael B. Sheedy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, flowing "M" and "S".

Michael B. Sheedy

cc: (Arch)Bishops of Florida