



FLORIDA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

201 W. Park Avenue
Tallahassee, FL 32301
www.flaccb.org

Michele M. Taylor, Associate Director for Communications, (850) 205-6817, mtaylor@flacathconf.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Michael B. Sheedy
Executive Director
(850) 205-6820

msheedy@flacathconf.org

Governor Scott Urged to Commute Sentence of Juan Carlos Chavez to Life in Prison Without Possibility of Parole; Prayer Services Held Statewide

Tallahassee (February 5, 2014) – The Florida Catholic Conference urges Governor Rick Scott to commute the sentence of Juan Carlos Chavez, scheduled for execution February 12. Mr. Chavez deserves to be punished for the brutal acts of violence he inflicted upon his victim, Jimmy Ryce. Life in prison without the possibility of parole is a severe punishment that will serve this purpose.

“We lament the pain endured by the Ryce family and pray for all those who mourn Jimmy’s death,” said Michael Sheedy, executive director. “The death of the assailant will neither restore life, nor take away the grief caused by his violent crime.”

The Catholic Church recognizes that the state has the right to carry out the death penalty if necessary to keep society safe from an unjust aggressor. However, justice can be served and society protected without resorting to the deliberate taking of a person’s life. Through advances in our penal system, state-sanctioned killing is unwarranted and reinforces a growing disrespect for the sacredness of all human life.

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 of the use of the death penalty:

Archdiocese of Miami

A prayer vigil will be held following 11:45 a.m. Mass on Wednesday, February 12 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, February 12 at the following locations:

- In front of the St. Augustine Beach City Hall at the corner of A1A and 16th Street, 4:30 - 5:30 p.m. Contact: Nancy O’Byrne, (904) 461-9216, obyren@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
- Across the highway from the Florida State Prison Execution Building, Starke, 5:00 - 6:30 p.m. Drive eight miles west of US 301 on Florida Highway 16 West. Contact: John Linnehan, (904) 504-1004, metanoia.mx@gmail.com

A carpool will be leaving on Wednesday, February 12 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 near Starke. Contact: Michelle Garcia, (352) 372-3533, info@catholicgators.com.

Additional Contact: Kathleen Bagg, Office of Communications, Diocese of St. Augustine, (904) 262-3200.

Diocese of St. Petersburg

Spirit FM 90.5 WBVM Tampa will be praying on air Wednesday, February 12 beginning at 5:50 p.m. Spirit FM is also available on the internet (www.spiritfm905.com).

A prayer vigil will be held at Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Church, 550 U.S. Highway 41 S., Inverness on Wednesday, February 12 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. Patrick Catholic Church, 6803 Old Hwy 441 South, Mt. Dora on Wednesday, February 12 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 February 12 at 2:30 p.m. for a prayer service outside 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 Wednesday, February 12 at 11:00 a.m. (CST). Contact: (850) 438-4985.

A holy hour will be held at St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church, 1008 Fortune Avenue, Panama City, on Monday, February 10 at 7:00 p.m. (CST). Contact: (850) 763-1821, stj.office@knology.net.

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 Thursday, February 13 at 6:00 p.m.

Additional Contact: Peggy DeKeyser, Office of Communications, Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee, (850) 435-3528, dekeyserp@ptdiocese.org.

Tallahassee Citizens Against the Death Penalty will sponsor an interfaith prayer vigil scheduled for Wednesday, February 12 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, February 13 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, February 12 at 5:30 p.m. at the chapel in 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, February 9, at 7:00 p.m. Contact: Maria, (239) 540-7096, maria1403@juno.com.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church, 425 South Tamiami Trail, Osprey, will hold a prayer vigil on Wednesday, February 12 at 5:30 p.m. Contact: Janine Marrone, (941) 497-4917.

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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.