

FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

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MICHAEL B. SHEEDY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



May 31, 2023

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

Re: Please stay execution of Duane Owen and commute his sentence

Dear Governor DeSantis:

As the scheduled execution of Duane Owen approaches, we write to ask you to grant a stay and commute his sentence to life without parole.

Mr. Owen was convicted of and sentenced to death for the 1984 murders of Karen Slattery and Georgianna Worden in Palm Beach County, Florida. His senseless and horrific acts tragically ended the lives of these young women and have caused immeasurable grief and suffering to the victims' families, loved ones and communities.

However, taking Mr. Owen's life will not restore the lives of the victims. Intentionally ending his life will do nothing but perpetuate violence in a society steeped in it. Justice does not demand state-sanctioned killing that disrespects the dignity and sacredness of human life. Rather, justice is best served by the alternative punishment of life-long incarceration. Society must be kept safe from Mr. Owen and those like him, but that can be done effectively without resorting to more violence.

There are also notable mitigating circumstances presented in Mr. Owen's case. He was raised by alcoholic parents who both died when he was a very young child, he lived in an abusive orphanage, endured physical and sexual abuse, and suffered from organic brain damage. Such traumatic experiences and injuries have been shown to profoundly affect a child's development and subsequent behavior.

Floridians around the state will soon be gathering in prayer for Ms. Slattery, Ms. Worden, and all who have been harmed by Mr. Owen's actions, for him, for everyone affected by violent crime, and for an end to the use of the death penalty.

We also pray for you as you consider this request.

Sincerely,

Michael B. Sheedy

cc: Archbishop and Bishops of Florida
Christie C. Arnold, Associate for Social Concerns & Respect Life