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Catholic Conference of Kentucky Appeals to Governor Not to Sign Death Warrants

The Catholic Conference of Kentucky today appeals to Governor Steven L. Beshear not to sign the death penalty warrants requested by Attorney General Jack Conway for three Kentucky inmates: Ralph Baze, Jr., Robert Foley and Gregory Wilson. While praying for the victims of these heinous crimes and their families, the Conference remains concerned the death penalty is “both cruel and unnecessary” and does more harm than good to society when the state kills a human being as an act reflecting public policy.

Consistent with repeated appeals to abolish capital punishment, the Catholic Conference of Kentucky calls upon Governor Beshear to lead the Commonwealth of Kentucky in demonstrating and joining the growing world-wide opposition to capital punishment.

In a nation where the judicial system is not perfect and where individuals convicted of crimes have been found to be innocent years after conviction, the Commonwealth of Kentucky should refrain from exacting the ultimate punishment of death from which there is no reversal.

Ten years ago while in St. Louis, Pope John Paul II said the death penalty is “both cruel and unnecessary.” (Homily, January 27, 1999) The United States Catholic bishops have stated: “The antidote to violence is not more violence.” (USCCB *Faithful Citizenship*, 2003) and “Ending the death penalty would be one important step away from a culture of death and toward building a culture of life.” (*A Culture of Life and the Penalty of Death*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005)

“The Catholic Conference of Kentucky calls upon Governor Beshear to lead the Commonwealth of Kentucky to a more enlightened public policy and to refrain from executing those convicted. The passage of time since these heinous crimes were committed amply demonstrates that society legitimately can protect itself by modern means of incarceration rather than resorting to the taking of life in the death penalty,” said Robert J. Castagna, Executive Director.

“The Catholic Conference of Kentucky pledges its willingness to work with Governor Beshear and the Kentucky Legislature to abolish the death penalty in favor of life without parole as the means to insure necessary public safety.”

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The Catholic Conference of KY is an agency of the Catholic Bishops, established in 1983. It speaks for the Church in matters of public policy, serves as liaison to government and the legislature, and coordinates communications and activities between the church and secular agencies. The Bishops of the four dioceses of KY constitute its Board of Directors.