

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact Information:

Edward C. Monahan, Executive Director
Office: (502)875-4345

Rev. Patrick Delahanty, Associate Director
Office: (502)875-4345

KY BISHOPS SADDENED BY SIGNING OF DEATH WARRANT

FRANKFORT —The Roman Catholic Bishops of Kentucky are deeply saddened by the decision of Governor Ernie Fletcher to sign the death warrant for Mr. Bowling.

In a meeting on October 18, 2004 Kentucky's Catholic Bishops asked Governor Fletcher to commute Thomas Bowling's sentence of death to life without parole. The Bishops proclaimed the sacredness not only of innocent life, but even of the life of the guilty.

In the letter to Governor Fletcher that followed the meeting the Bishops said, "God's justice is not blind. It is imbued with mercy. We ask that you, as a man of faith and as a moral leader in Kentucky, provide mercy to Thomas Bowling."

The Bishops added their voices to the prophetic witness of Pope John Paul II who, when he last visited our nation, appealed for an end to capital punishment: "The new evangelization calls for followers of Christ who are unconditionally pro-life: who will proclaim, celebrate and serve the Gospel of life in every situation. A sign of hope is the increasing recognition that the dignity of human life must never be taken away, even in the case of someone who has done great evil. Modern society has the means of protecting itself, without definitively denying criminals the chance to reform (cf. *Evangelium Vitae*, no. 27). I renew the appeal I made most recently at Christmas for a consensus to end the death penalty, which is both cruel and unnecessary."

Kentuckians increasingly oppose the death penalty. A significant shift of opinion has occurred in Kentucky over the last 15 years as demonstrated by the "2001 Attitudes Toward the Death Penalty in Kentucky: A Comparison of Survey Results-1989, 1997, 1999" published in *Kentucky Justice and Safety Research Bulletin*. Today, the majority of Kentuckians prefer a sentence of life without parole to a sentence of death.

The Governor has promoted a Culture of Life in his work to eliminate abortion, preclude cloning, prevent embryonic stem cell research, and by his signing into law the fetal homicide bill that holds accountable those who would kill the unborn, and shows further respect for life by forbidding the death sentence when fetal homicide is proven. Signing the death warrant in our view undermines the Culture of Life.

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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.