



Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops

THE PUBLIC POLICY VOICE OF THE CHURCH

March 22, 2022

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P.O. Box 12428
Austin, TX 78711

Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles
Clemency Section
8610 Shoal Creek Boulevard
Austin, Texas 78758

Luis Saenz
Cameron County District Attorney's Office
964 E. Harrison Street
Brownsville, TX 78520

Re: Melissa Lucio, TDCJ #999537

Dear Governor Abbott, Board Members, and District Attorney Saenz,

As the active Roman Catholic Bishops in Texas, we urge you to act in your respective capacities to stop the impending execution of Melissa Lucio on April 27, 2022. We call on Mr. Saenz to withdraw the execution date. We call on the board to grant a stay of execution, and we call on Governor Abbott to affirm that stay and grant her clemency for a meaningful review of her case.

We continue to pray for everyone who has been touched by the tragic loss of Mariah's life, especially for the suffering Ms. Lucio and her family have endured. We are also fervently praying that clemency be granted to Ms. Lucio, not solely because of the Church's opposition to the death penalty and the inherent dignity of every human life, but also due to the mitigating circumstances surrounding her case.

Justice was not served by Ms. Lucio's conviction and will not be served by her execution, considering her history as a victim of sexual abuse and domestic violence, her troubling interrogation by law enforcement, and the unanswered questions regarding the manner of her daughter Mariah's death.

Ms. Lucio is a faithful Catholic on death row in the Diocese of Austin. Her spiritual adviser, Deacon Ronnie Lastovica, reports her heart is centered on Christ and she has helped bring others to Christ.

In the case of Thomas Whitaker, whose guilt was not in question, this board showed tremendous compassion and mercy when his family, who were the victims in his case, sought clemency. In this case, Mariah's siblings, her grandmother, her father, and aunts and uncles were devastated when they lost her 14 years ago and are desperate not to lose Melissa. We urge you to follow that precedent, especially when there is a strong case for her innocence.

The Church expects accountability for harm, legitimate discipline and reparation, and the protection of society, but executions are completely unnecessary and unacceptable. Voluntarily taking a human life, regardless of the rationale, is contrary to Christian revelation.

The Holy Father's call to abolish the death penalty reminds us justice happens, not through punishment and vengeance, but out of a sense of responsibility beyond the present moment. Conversion, repentance and the desire to start life anew cannot be denied anyone, including those guilty of the most serious crimes.

We beseech you to commute her death sentence and conduct a meaningful review of her case to enable this family to continue the hard work of restorative justice and healing.

Yours in Christ,

+ Daniel Cardinal DiNardo

Daniel Cardinal DiNardo
Archbishop of Galveston-Houston

+ Patrick J. Zurek

Most Reverend Patrick J. Zurek
Bishop of Amarillo

+ David L. Toups

Most Reverend David L. Toups
Bishop of Beaumont

+ William Michael Mulvey

Most Reverend William Michael Mulvey
Bishop of Corpus Christi

+ Mark J. Seitz

Most Reverend Mark J. Seitz
Bishop of El Paso

+ James Tamayo

Most Reverend James A. Tamayo
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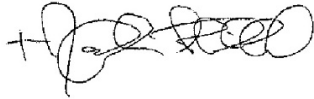
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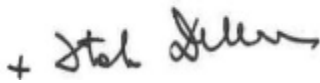
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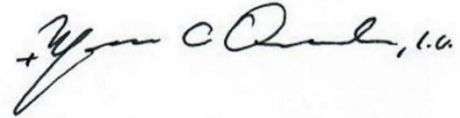
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