



Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston



Diocese of Austin

June 11, 2007

The Honorable Rick Perry  
Governor's Office  
P.O. Box 12428  
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Governor Perry:

On behalf of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston and on behalf of the Diocese of Austin, we urge you to recommend clemency for Cathy Henderson who is scheduled to be executed on June 13, 2007. Ms. Henderson was sentenced to death in 1995 for the murder of a three-and-a-half-month-old baby, Brandon Baugh. We have tremendous sympathy for the family of Brandon Baugh, and in no way wish to downplay the suffering they have endured as a result of their child's death. Our faith tradition also compels us to ask for mercy for Cathy Henderson.

As you know, the Bishops of Texas and the United States oppose the use of the death penalty in our country. Catholic teaching on capital punishment is quite clear: If non-lethal means are sufficient to defend human lives against an aggressor and to protect public order and the safety of persons, public authority should limit itself to such means, because they better correspond to the concrete conditions of the common good and are more in conformity with the dignity of the human person (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*).

Our Church fully believes that those who commit terrible violent crimes must be incarcerated, both as just punishment and in order to protect society. We stand in solidarity with victims and their loved ones, however, when it comes to matters of life and death, morality and common sense call for justice, mercy and for careful safeguards.

It is our understanding that there are now serious questions being raised regarding testimony of the medical expert who testified in 1995 that the baby's head injuries could not have been accidental. That testimony was critical in showing that Cathy Henderson intentionally murdered Brandon Baugh. It is also our understanding this medical expert, Dr. Robert Bayardo, has recently signed an affidavit stating that with new developments in scientific methods he can no longer support his original testimony. We do not hold ourselves out as experts in forensic science but justice, common sense and mercy should guide all of us in such an important matter. At the very least, a key expert witness changing his testimony should necessitate a reexamination of this case.

As pastors, we strongly believe that the use of the death penalty diminishes all of us as human beings. Furthermore, as Pope John Paul II reminds us, because modern societies can defend human life against convicted killers without resorting to capital punishment, it should restrict itself to those means. Such non-violent measures can give the offender time to repent of his or her crime and allow the possibility of receiving God's grace.

We will continue to pray for the Baugh family. We pray for Cathy Henderson and all those affected by Brandon's death. We also urge you to recommend clemency for Cathy Henderson.

Yours in Christ,

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