



## FLORIDA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

201 W. Park Avenue  
Tallahassee, FL 32301  
[www.flaccb.org](http://www.flaccb.org)

**Michele M. Taylor**

Associate Director for Communications, (850) 205-6817, [mtaylor@flacathconf.org](mailto:mtaylor@flacathconf.org)

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Contact:**

Ingrid M. Delgado  
Associate for Social Concerns/Respect Life  
(850) 205-6826  
[idelgado@flacathconf.org](mailto:idelgado@flacathconf.org)

**Do not repay evil for evil;  
Catholic bishops of Florida urge Governor Scott to spare the life of Askari Muhammad**

**Tallahassee (January 3, 2014)** – The Catholic bishops of Florida appeal to Governor Scott to spare the life of Askari Muhammad, formerly known as Thomas Knight, scheduled to be executed January 7, 2014, at 6:00 p.m. near Starke, FL. We express our most profound sympathies to the loved ones of the victims who were tragically killed as a result of his actions: Lillian Gans, Sydney Gans, and Officer Richard Burke.

The Florida Supreme Court recently upheld the use of a new drug in Florida's lethal injection process. However, any method of carrying out the death penalty only perpetuates violence among us. The Catholic Church holds that all life is sacred, even the lives of those who have caused great harm. We urge the State of Florida to show mercy to Mr. Muhammad. As St. Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans, "Do not be conquered by evil but conquer evil with good." (Romans 12:21)

While the number of U.S. executions decreased, Florida was responsible for the second highest number of executions (7) carried out in 2013. In the new year, we pray that Florida reverses this trend and joins the 18 states that have ended the use of the death penalty.

Catholic faithful and members of the community are invited to gather in solidarity at the following times and locations:

Diocese of St. Augustine

Prayer vigils will be held on Tuesday, January 7 at the following locations:

- In front of the St. Augustine Beach City Hall, corner of A1A and 16th Street, 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Contact: Nancy O'Byrne, (904) 461-9216, [obyren@bellsouth.net](mailto:obyren@bellsouth.net)
- In front of the new Duval County Unified Courthouse, 501 W. Adams Street, Jacksonville, 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Contact: Jackie Gunning, (904) 449-3328, [jacqueline.gunning@bmcjax.com](mailto:jacqueline.gunning@bmcjax.com) or Sr. Maureen Kelley, 904-704-0313, [mkelleyop@att.net](mailto:mkelleyop@att.net)
- In front of the Flagler County Courthouse, 1769 E. Moody Blvd, Bunnell from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Contact: Jackie Morelewicz, (386) 986-3146, [jackiem@cfl.rr.com](mailto:jackiem@cfl.rr.com)
- Across the highway from the Florida State Prison Execution Building, Starke from 5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Contact: John Linnehan, (904) 504-1004, [metanoia.mx@gmail.com](mailto:metanoia.mx@gmail.com)

A carpool will be leaving on Tuesday, January 7 at 4:30 p.m. from the parking lot of St. Augustine Church and Catholic Student Center, 1738 W. University Avenue, Gainesville to attend a prayer service at Florida State Prison near Starke. Contact: Michelle Garcia, (352) 372-3533, [info@catholicgators.com](mailto:info@catholicgators.com).

Additional Contact: Kathleen Bagg, Office of Communications, Diocese of St. Augustine, (904) 262-3200.

Diocese of St. Petersburg

Spirit FM 90.5 WBVM Tampa will be praying on air Tuesday, January 7 beginning at 5:50 pm. Spirit FM is also available on the internet ([www.spiritfm905.com](http://www.spiritfm905.com)).

A prayer vigil will be held at Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Church, 550 U.S. Highway 41 S., Inverness on Tuesday, January 7 at 5:30 p.m.

Nativity Catholic Church will hold a Prayer Vigil in the Chapel on for Monday, January 6 at 7:00 p.m., 705 E. Brandon Boulevard, Brandon.

Contact: Sabrina Burton Schultz, Diocese of St. Petersburg, (727) 344-1611, [sab@dosp.org](mailto:sab@dosp.org).

#### Diocese of Orlando

A prayer service will be held at St. Patrick Catholic Church, 6803 Old Hwy 441 South, Mt. Dora on Tuesday, January 7 at 3:00 p.m.

A bus will be leaving from the parking lot of Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church, 201 University Blvd., Daytona Beach on January 7 at 2:30 p.m. for a prayer service outside of the prison in Starke at 6:00 p.m.

Contact: Office of Advocacy and Justice, (407) 246-4819, [advocacyjustice@orlandodiocese.org](mailto:advocacyjustice@orlandodiocese.org).

#### Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee

A holy hour will take place at Basilica of St. Michael the Archangel, 19 N Palafox St, Pensacola, on Monday, January 6 at 5:00 p.m. (CST). Contact: (850) 436-6461.

A holy hour will be held at St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church, 1008 Fortune Avenue, Panama City, on Monday, January 6 at 7:00 p.m. (CST). Contact: (850) 763-1821, [stj.office@knology.net](mailto:stj.office@knology.net).

A prayer service to end the use of the death penalty is held at Immaculate Conception parish, 2750 South Byron Butler Parkway, Perry, every Thursday afternoon at 3:00 p.m.

Additional Contact: Peggy DeKeyser, Office of Communications, Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee, (850) 435-3528, [dekeyserp@ptdiocese.org](mailto:dekeyserp@ptdiocese.org).

Tallahassee Citizens Against the Death Penalty will sponsor an interfaith prayer vigil scheduled for Tuesday, January 7 at 6:00 p.m. in front of the Governor's Mansion in Tallahassee and a service of remembrance in the Capitol Building Plaza Level Rotunda the day after the execution, Wednesday, January 8 at noon. Contact: Sheila Meehan, (850) 524-0080.

#### Diocese of Venice

A prayer vigil will be held in the Chapel at St. Katharine Drexel Catholic Church, 1922 SW 20th Avenue, Cape Coral on Sunday, January 5, at 7:00 p.m. Contact: Maria, (239) 540-7096, [maria1403@juno.com](mailto:maria1403@juno.com).

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church, 425 South Tamiami Trail, Osprey, will hold a prayer vigil on Tuesday, January 7 at 5:30 p.m. Contact: Janine Marrone, (941) 497-4917.

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*The Florida Catholic Conference is an agency of the Catholic Bishops of Florida. The archbishop and bishops of the seven (arch)dioceses in Florida constitute its board of directors.*