



**TENNESSEE  
CATHOLIC  
CONFERENCE**

Rick Musacchio  
Executive Director  
2800 McGavock Pike  
Nashville, TN 37214

May 6, 2026

Dear Governor Lee,

Greetings in Christ.

Please know that we truly value the warm relationship that we have enjoyed throughout your term as Governor of Tennessee. In the spirit of the many conversations that we have had over the years, and remembering the encouragement that you have given us to continue bringing this important life issue to your attention, we write to respectfully urge you to grant clemency and halt the scheduled execution of Tony Carruthers.

We do so first and foremost with the victims of his crimes, Marcellos Anderson, Delois Anderson, and Frederick Tucker in mind. We pray for them by name, that their memory be honored with dignity, and that their loved ones continue to find strength and peace that only the love and mercy of our Father in heaven can provide.

Nothing in this request minimizes the profound harm caused by their murders. Rather, it reflects a careful consideration of whether execution is necessary—or just—in this case.

Tennessee law envisions the death penalty for the “worst of the worst.” Yet, when compared to other capital cases in our state, this case does not fall at the outermost extreme. While undeniably serious, this crime reflects a category of cases where many similarly situated defendants have received life sentences rather than death. This inconsistency underscores a broader concern: the death penalty is not applied in a uniform or reliably proportional manner. Moreover, the fact that Mr. Carruthers’ accomplice received a life sentence further complicates the fairness of imposing the ultimate punishment here.

As we have pointed out in earlier letters, our own Church teaching has evolved on the topic of the death penalty. Once it saw execution as a legal means to protect society from those who have committed grave crimes. The last four popes, beginning with Pope St. John Paul II and continuing the first American born pope, Leo XIV, have clearly stated and formally incorporated into our teaching that the death penalty is no longer necessary to protect society and is not permissible as a just punishment.

A sentence of life without the possibility of parole ensures Mr Carruthers will never be released, while still holding him fully accountable. Such a sentence affirms justice without resorting to irreversible punishment. Mercy is not the absence of justice—it is a recognition of our shared humanity, even in the face of grave wrongdoing. Granting clemency would not erase the past, but it would reflect a commitment to measured, consistent, and humane justice.

We ask you to consider commuting Mr. Carruthers’ sentence to life without parole. In doing so, you would uphold accountability while also affirming that the most severe punishment is reserved for the most extreme cases.

Most Reverend J. Mark Spalding  
Bishop of Nashville

Most Reverend David P. Talley  
Bishop of Memphis

Most Reverend Mark Beckman  
Bishop of Knoxville

Rick Musacchio  
Tennessee Catholic Conference