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Catholic Conference of Illinois applauds state Supreme Court decision for review of juvenile mandatory life without parole sentences

CHICAGO – The Illinois Supreme Court today ruled that Adolfo Davis, who was sentenced to mandatory life without parole for crimes he committed as a juvenile, should receive a new sentencing hearing. The decision comes on the heels of a 2012 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that such mandatory sentences “violate . . . the Eighth Amendment’s ban on cruel and unusual punishment.”

The Catholic Conference of Illinois applauds the state Supreme Court’s decision. CCI in August joined other faith-based organizations in an amicus brief to the Davis case, pointing out the U.S. Supreme Court noted that juveniles lack maturity, are far more impressionable than adults, and still have the capacity to change.

Davis has spent more than 20 years behind bars for participating in a robbery that ended up killing two people. He was 14 when he committed the crime in which he never fired a shot.

The Catholic Conference further notes that Davis has accepted responsibility for his actions, attained his General Education Diploma, and works with a Catholic priest to deter at-risk children from criminal activity. Cardinal George of the Archdiocese of Chicago in 2011 wrote Gov. Pat Quinn, asking him to commute Davis’ sentence.

“We support the justifiable punishment of crime, but also believe in the redemptive abilities of the individual, especially juveniles who can mature, repent and develop into productive members of society,” said CCI Executive Director Robert Gilligan.

Gilligan also noted the Conference supports state legislation ending mandatory life sentences without parole for juveniles, a position shared by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

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The Catholic Conference of Illinois was created in 1969 to serve as the public policy voice of the Illinois bishops and the six diocese of the state: Belleville, Chicago, Joliet, Peoria, Rockford and Springfield-in-Illinois.