

## Capital Punishment

If, instead, bloodless means are sufficient to defend against the aggressor and to protect 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 to the dignity of the human person. Today, in fact, given the means at the State's disposal to effectively repress crime by rendering inoffensive the one who has committed it, without depriving him definitively of the possibility of redeeming himself, cases of absolute necessity for suppression of the offender 'today . . . are very rare, if not practically non-existent. CCC 2266-2267.



". . . the nature and extent of the punishment must be carefully evaluated and decided upon, and ought not to go to the extreme of executing the offender except in cases of absolute necessity; in other words, when it would not be possible otherwise to defend society. Today however, as a result of steady improvements in the organization of the penal system, such cases are very rare, if not practically non-existent." *Evangelium Vitae* n. 56.

God drove Cain into exile, but "put a mark on Cain, lest any who came upon him should kill him,"

Gen. 4:15; God "did not desire that a homicide be punished by the exaction of another act of homicide." St. Ambrose; *Evangelium Vitae* n. 9.

"Not even a murderer loses his personal dignity, and God himself pledges to guarantee this." *Evangelium Vitae* n. 9.

### Church Documents:

*Evangelium Vitae, Gospel of Life*, Pope John Paul II (1995). Available at [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_25031995\\_evangelium-vitae\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae_en.html).

Statement on the Death Penalty, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (1980), <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/death-penalty-capital-punishment/statement-on-capital-punishment.cfm>

### Catholic Websites:

Catholic Mobilizing Network, <http://catholicmobilizing.org/>

Catholic Campaign to End the Use of the Death Penalty. Available at <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/death-penalty-capital-punishment/catholic-campaign-to-end-the-use-of-the-death-penalty.cfm>.

How to Vote Catholic: The Death Penalty," CatholiCity: The Catholic Church Simplified, <http://www.catholicity.com/vote/death-penalty.html>

"The Death Penalty & The Catholic Church," AmericanCatholic.org, <http://www.americancatholic.org/news/deathpenalty/>

"Choose Life: Catholic Teaching and the Death Penalty," Indiana Catholic Conference, August 1998, <http://www.cacp.org/vaticandocuments.html>

"What the Vatican Has Said," Catholics Against Capital Punishment, <http://priestsforlife.org/magisterium/indianadeathpenalty.htm>

"The Death Penalty," Theology Library, <http://www.shc.edu/theolibrary/death.htm>

### **Articles and Publications:**

Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien, Testimony at the MD Commission on Capital Punishment (August 2008). Available at <http://www.archbalt.org/about-us/the-archbishop/homilies/death-penalty.cfm>.

Statement by Catholic Bishops of Texas on Capital Punishment, DeathPenaltyInfo.org, October 20, 1997, <http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/statement-catholic-bishops-texas-capital-punishment>

Montana Catholic Conference, On Capital Punishment, November 1981, <http://old.usccb.org/sdwp/national/criminal/death/mt81.shtml>

Backgrounder on the Death Penalty, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development, Office of Domestic Social Development (2011). Available at <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/death-penalty-capital-punishment/>

Maryland Commission on the Death Penalty Report, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/8948491/Maryland-Death-Penalty-Commission-Final-Report>

Victim Advocates Against the Death Penalty, by Andrew Rivas, 2006, <http://old.usccb.org/prolife/programs/rlp/ArticleRivasNoCropsHiRez.pdf> (En Español, <http://old.usccb.org/prolife/programs/rlp/RivasLongSp.pdf>)

Justice, Mercy and Capital Punishment by Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap., 2005, <http://old.usccb.org/prolife/programs/rlp/Chaput05web.shtml> (En Español, [http://old.usccb.org/prolife/programs/rlp/Chaput05web\\_sp.shtml](http://old.usccb.org/prolife/programs/rlp/Chaput05web_sp.shtml))

We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us, by Maureen Kramlich, 2003, <http://old.usccb.org/prolife/programs/rlp/03rlkramlich.shtml> (En Español, <http://old.usccb.org/prolife/programs/rlp/03kramlichs.shtml>)

Living and Dying on Death Row: An Eyewitness Account, by Joseph Ross, 2001,  
<http://old.usccb.org/prolife/programs/rlp/01ros.shtml> (En Español,  
<http://old.usccb.org/prolife/programs/rlp/01rosp.shtml>)

The Gospel of Life and the Sentence of Death: Catholic Teaching on Capital Punishment, by Rev. Augustine Judd, 2000, <http://old.usccb.org/prolife/programs/rlp/00rljud.shtml> (En Español,  
<http://old.usccb.org/prolife/programs/rlp/00rljuddsp.shtml>)

### **Important Dates:**

- March 26, 2009            Maryland House of Delegates passes bill that severely restricts use of death penalty, making Maryland's death penalty law one of the strictest in the nation.
- May 7, 2009             Governor Martin O'Malley signs death penalty legislation, giving Maryland the most restrictive law of the 35 states that allow the death penalty.

### **Video:**

“The Death Penalty: No Justice, No Healing, No Closure,” Indiana Catholic Conference, October 2010,  
<http://www.youtube.com/CMNEndDeathPenalty#p/a/u/0/oHyj7a4lZZY>

- Message from death row chaplains, prisoners on death row, and victim's family
- 15 minutes

Sister Helen Prejean, “Sanctity of Life,” August 2010,  
<http://www.youtube.com/CMNEndDeathPenalty#p/u/3/iKOhlTuPv8U>

- How Capital Punishment fits into the Gospel of Jesus and why pro-life Catholics oppose the death penalty.
- 10 minutes

Sister Helen Prejean, “Murder Victims’ Families and the Dead Man Walking Play Project

- Tells stories of conversion and support. Explains the Dead Man Walking Play Project,  
<http://www.youtube.com/CMNEndDeathPenalty#p/u/2/FxcWglAEK4I>
- 10 minutes

Culture of Life, <http://www.youtube.com/CMNEndDeathPenalty#p/u/4/v1NIJVu6IGM>

- Quick recap of the Bishop's position on Capital Punishment and the culture of life.
- 4 minutes

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