

DEATH PENALTY FACTS

Over **3,000** individuals await execution on America's death row.

INNOCENCE



For every 9 executions, one person on death row has been exonerated.

RACE

Roughly 80% of death penalty cases resulting in an execution involved a white victim, even though only 50% of all murder victims are white.

PLACE

56% of US death sentences come from 2% of counties



POVERTY

Nearly all death penalty defendants cannot afford to hire a private attorney.

MENTAL ILLNESS

Over half of the last 100 people executed were diagnosed with or displayed symptoms of mental illness.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Do I embrace the call to mercy and encounter in my relations with loved ones and with my community?

As I practice prayer, fasting, and almsgiving this Lent, am I reflecting on survivors and families whose lives have been touched by crime? Are incarcerated persons and their families also present in my reflections?

Is my parish a welcoming place, an 'oasis of mercy,' for those whose lives have been harmed by crime? For those who are incarcerated, formerly incarcerated, or family members of the incarcerated?

As I reflect upon the execution of our savior Jesus Christ, how am I called to oppose the executions of all of the children of God?

Do I strive to live the principles of being unconditionally pro-life? How do I work on a daily basis to build a culture of life?

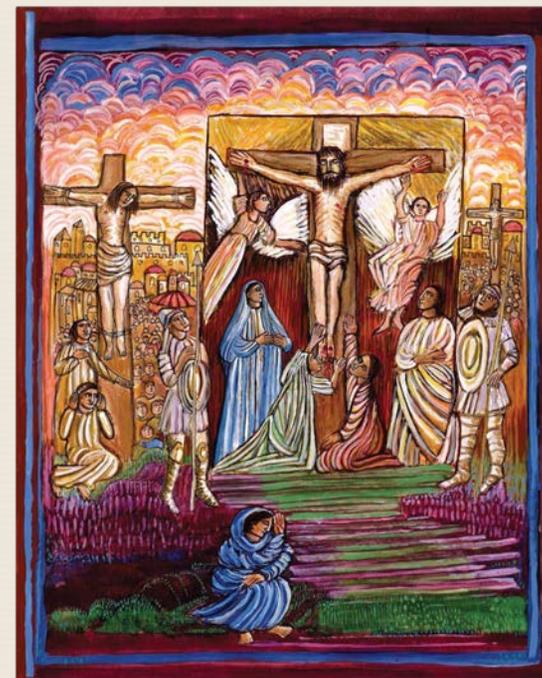


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A Good Friday Reflection



to end the use of the
Death Penalty



CATHOLIC
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**“On this Good Friday,
a day when we recall our Savior’s
own execution, we appeal to all
people of goodwill, and especially
Catholics, to work to end the death
penalty.**

We oppose capital punishment not just for what it does to those guilty of horrible crimes but for what it does to all of us as a society.

Increasing reliance on the death penalty diminishes all of us and is a sign of growing disrespect for human life.

We cannot overcome crime by simply executing criminals, nor can we restore the lives of the innocent by ending the lives of those convicted of their murders.

The death penalty offers the tragic illusion that we can defend life by taking life. “

-United States Conference of Catholic Bishops



“All Christians and people of good will are thus called today to struggle... for abolition of the death penalty, whether it be legal or illegal and in all its forms...”
- **Pope Francis, October 2015**



“...I draw the attention of society’s leaders to the need to make every effort to eliminate the death penalty and to reform the penal system...”
- **Pope Benedict XVI, November 2011**



“I renew the appeal...to end the death penalty, which is both cruel and unnecessary.”

-**Pope John Paul II, January 27, 1999**



A PRAYER TO END THE DEATH PENALTY

Merciful Father, we ask your blessing on all we do to build a culture of life. Hear our prayers for those impacted by the death penalty.

We pray for all people, that their lives and dignity as children of a loving God may be respected and protected in all stages and circumstances.

We pray for victims of violence and their families, that they may experience our love and support and find comfort in your compassion and in the promise of eternal life.

We pray for those on death row, that their lives may be spared, that the innocent may be freed and that the guilty may come to acknowledge their faults and seek reconciliation with you.

We pray for the families of those who are facing execution, that they may be comforted by your love and compassion.

We pray for civic leaders, that they may commit themselves to respecting every human life and ending the use of the death penalty in our land.

Compassionate Father, give us wisdom and hearts filled with your love. Guide us as we work to end the use of the death penalty and to build a society that truly chooses life in all situations.

We ask this Father through your Son Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.

Source: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Amen