



Scripture and Tradition: Ezekiel (33:11): "As I live, says the Lord God, I swear I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked man, but rather in the wicked man's conversion, that he may live." In the Christian Scriptures, *Jesus' life and teachings* (see the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:1-7:29) *focus on mercy, reconciliation and redemption*. Jesus' death was itself an application of the death penalty. The basic thrust of the Gospels supports opposition to the death penalty. Indeed, the early Church, in the writings of Clement of Rome [died 101 A.D.] and Justin Martyr [d. 165] generally found taking human life to be incompatible with the gospel. Christians were not to participate in capital punishment. Later, after Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire, opposition to the death penalty declined. Augustine recognized the death penalty as a means of deterring the wicked and protecting the innocent. In the Middle Ages, Thomas Aquinas reaffirmed this position. The new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reflects this tradition, stating that the death penalty is possible in cases of extreme gravity. However, the *Catechism* adds: "If bloodless means [that is, other than killing] are sufficient to defend human lives against an aggressor and to protect public order and 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*" (#2267). Clearly, then, the bishops' opposition to the death penalty is in accord with universal Church teaching. (americancatholic.org) Please refer to the Catechism Chapter 2, Article 5 The Fifth Commandment #2258-2269 for teachings of capital punishment/death penalty.

A Pro-life Position

"Increasingly, our society looks to increased reliance on the death penalty to deal with crime. We are tragically turning to violence in the search for quick and easy answers to complex human problems. **A society which destroys its children, abandons its old and relies on vengeance fails fundamental moral tests.** We cannot teach that killing is wrong by killing. This cycle of violence diminishes all of us—especially our children."

- *Confronting a Culture of Violence: A Catholic Framework for Action* - U.S. Catholic bishops, November 1994

"We have a very consistent commitment as Church to defending the sanctity of human life. We struggle mightily against abortion; we have a commitment and concern for the poor; we deplore racial and sexual discrimination and the self-destructive use of drugs. Our position against the use of the death penalty falls into that continuum. We believe that an issue such as capital punishment is not just a question of public policy, but is at its very core a moral issue, and therefore a religious issue and we must speak to it."

-Archbishop John Roach, St. Paul-Minneapolis

People instinctively know it is better to let the offender remain in prison and, hopefully over time, repent of his crime and change his life. To that end, the goal of Christian prison ministry was beautifully expressed by Pope Benedict XVI: "Chaplains and their collaborators are called to be heralds of God's infinite compassion and forgiveness. They are entrusted with the weighty task of helping the incarcerated rediscover a sense of purpose so that, with God's grace, they can reform their lives, be reconciled with their families and friends, and, insofar as possible, assume the responsibilities and duties which will enable them to conduct upright and honest lives" (Address to the International Commission of Catholic Prison Pastoral Care, Sept. 6, 2007). This is the way of Christian mercy and reconciliation, and a challenge to all who call themselves Christian. (usccb.org/prolife)

Suggested Monthly Penance

Find a quiet, isolated space and sit for 30 mins daily. Imagine yourself imprisoned. Listen to the quiet.

Please continue to support Holy Rosary's prison ministry outreach by donating your monthly Magnificent or other reputable Catholic publications to be distributed to area prison inmates. Watch the bulletin for details. Thank you, to the Holy Rosary parishioners who started this program and thank you to Lumen Christi students who have also baked cookies for local inmates. Information about Kairos Prison Ministry, St. Monica Catholic Church's outreach program, can be found at st.monicaindy.org/karios as well as information on other local options in prison ministry.

Monthly Prayer

Prayer to Saint Dismas, the Good Thief, Patron Saint of Prisoners

You cooperated with the grace that was yours in suffering the same fate as the Divine Master.

You repented for your sins and believed, and you heard the Savior say:
"Today you will be with me in paradise."

Obtain for prisoners the same grace to repent of their wicked ways, and obtain the same reward - eternal life with Christ.

Through the intercession of St. Maximillian Kolbe, Patron Saint for Death Penalty, Prisoners and Pro-Life Movement, we pray this through Christ Our Lord, Amen.

Our Lady, Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, pray for us.

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