



Catholic Conference of Ohio

Death Penalty Education

9 E. Long St. Suite 201
Columbus, Ohio 43215
614-224-7147

www.ohiocathconf.org

An Invitation from the Catholic Bishops of Ohio

April 2015

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Murder rightly evokes moral outrage and a call for justice. It also calls for spiritual healing and caring support for all those impacted by such a tragedy. Just punishment - punishment that reflects the seriousness of the offense, seeks restoration for the offense, and protects society - is a foundational moral principle within our justice system.

Just punishment can occur without resorting to the death penalty. As stated by Pope Francis, "It is impossible to imagine that states today cannot make use of another means than capital punishment to defend peoples' lives from an unjust aggressor." We Catholic Bishops of Ohio have consistently advocated for an end to the use of the death penalty. We seek mercy because we believe that spiritual conversion is possible and that all life, even that of the worst offender, has value and dignity.

Today, given the means available to the State for dealing with crime, cases where it is absolutely necessary to use the death penalty are practically nonexistent. In other states and countries, life imprisonment has shown itself to be an effective alternative.

We invite you to participate in this outreach of prayer, education and advocacy to end the use of the death penalty. We are pleased to partner with Ohioans to Stop Executions and the Catholic Mobilizing Network on this important project.

May God bless our efforts.

Catholic Bishops of Ohio

Diocesan Contacts

Archdiocese of Cincinnati

Catholic Social Action
100 East 8th Street
Cincinnati, OH 45202; (513) 421-3131 ext.
2660
csa@catholiccincinnati.org

Catholic Social Action
1436 Needmore Road
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Diocese of Columbus

Office for Social Concerns
197 E. Gay St
Columbus, OH 43215; 614-241-2540
socmailbox@coldioc.org

Diocese of Cleveland

Commission on Catholic Community Action
of Cuyahoga
7911 Detroit Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44102
(216) 939-3843; 1-888-620-5280
contactus@ccdocle.org.

Catholic Commission Summit
795 Russell Avenue
Akron, OH 44307; (330) 535-2787

Catholic Action Commission Lorain
628 Poplar St.
Elyria, OH 44035; (330) 366-1106 x12

Catholic Commission of Lake / Geauga
28700 Euclid Avenue
Wickliffe, OH 44092; (440) 943-7612

Catholic Commission of Wayne / Ashland /
Medina
P. O. BOX 109
Wooster, OH 44691; (330) 263-6176

Diocese of Steubenville

Office of Family & Social Concerns
422 Washington St.
Steubenville, OH 43952; 740-282-3631
1-800-339-7890 (Ohio Access)
www.diosteub.org

Byzantine Catholic Eparchy

1900 Carlton Rd
Parma, OH 44134; 216-741-8773

viscom@parma.org

Diocese of Toledo

Catholic Charities Jail & Prison Ministry
1933 Spielbusch Ave
Toledo, OH 43604;
419-244-6711 x 211; 1-800-926-8277
catholiccharitiesnwo.org/contact-us

Diocese of Youngstown

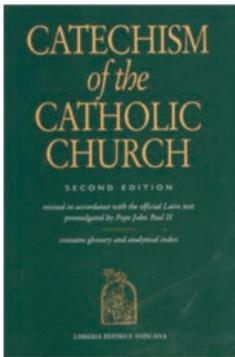
Catholic Charities/ Social Action
144 West Wood Street
Youngstown, Ohio 44503
Phone: 330-744-8451
www.ccdoy.org

Romanian Catholic Eparchy

1121 44th Street NE
Canton, OH 44714; 330-493-9355;
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Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy

P.O. BOX 347180
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Parma OH 44134; 440-888-1522
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What is the Catholic Church's position on the use of the death penalty?

At the heart of Catholic teaching on the death penalty is the belief the “*Human life is sacred* because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains for ever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end...” (Catechism, No. 2258).

Regarding the death penalty, the catechism of the Catholic Church states:

“Assuming that the guilty party's identity and responsibility have been fully determined, the traditional teaching of the Church does not exclude recourse to the death penalty, if this is the only possible way of effectively defending human lives against the unjust aggressor.

If, however, non-lethal means are sufficient to defend and protect people's safety from the aggressor, authority will limit itself to such means, as these are more in keeping with the concrete conditions of the common good and more in conformity with the dignity of the human person.

Today, in fact, as a consequence of the possibilities which the state has for effectively preventing crime, by rendering one who has committed an offense incapable of doing harm—without definitively taking away from him the possibility of redeeming himself—the cases in which the execution of the offender is an absolute necessity “are very rare, if not practically non-existent” (#2267).



Pope Francis on the Death Penalty

“It is impossible to imagine that states today cannot make use of another means than capital punishment to defend peoples' lives from an unjust aggressor ... All Christians and people of good will are thus called today to struggle not only for abolition of the death penalty, whether it be legal or illegal and in all its forms, but also to improve prison conditions, out of respect for the human dignity of persons deprived of their liberty.”

International Association of Criminal Law Address 10/24/2014

“Nowadays the death penalty is inadmissible, no matter how serious the crime committed. It is an offence against the inviolability of life and the dignity of the human person, which contradicts God's plan for man and society, and his merciful justice, and impedes the penalty from fulfilling any just objective. It does not render justice to the victims, but rather fosters vengeance...”

“The death penalty is contrary to the sentiment of *humanitas* and to divine mercy, which must be the model for human justice. ... There is discussion in some quarters about the method of killing, as if it were possible to find ways of 'getting it right'. ... But there is no humane way of killing another person...”

“Dear friends, I encourage you to continue with your work, as the world needs witnesses of God's mercy and tenderness, and may the Lord Jesus grant the gift of wisdom, so that the action taken against this cruel punishment may be successful and fruitful”.

International Commission Against the Death Penalty Address 3/20/2015



Prayer to End the Use of 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.

(Prayers: United States Conference Catholic Bishops)

What You Can Do

Pray for victims of crime and their families, those who have been wrongly convicted, and those awaiting execution.

Learn about Catholic social teaching regarding the death penalty.

Educate people in your parish, school or community about Catholic social teaching and the criminal justice system. Contact your diocesan social action office for more information and resources.

Advocate by contacting your elected officials. The Catholic Conference of Ohio will post action alerts regarding Ohio legislation that will limit and/or end the use of the death penalty. Prohibiting the death penalty for persons with serious mental illness is one issue of focus.

Resources & Actions



The Catholic Mobilizing Network supports Catholic institutions and organizations in their efforts to end the use of the death penalty in the United States, and in initiatives promoting restorative justice. This Network works in close collaboration with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

For excellent resources on Catholic teachings link to www.catholicsmobilizing.org



The Catholic Conference of Ohio is the official representative of the Catholic Church in public matters related to Ohio. In this project we are working closely with each diocesan social concerns/social action office.

Complete information on this project can be found at www.ohiocathconf.org



Ohioans To Stop Executions (OTSE) is a coalition of organizations and like-minded individuals working to reduce and end the use of capital punishment in Ohio. It is comprised of faith leaders, community leaders, activists, attorneys, death row exonerees and those who have lost loved ones to violence.

OTSE website contains a wealth of information regarding the death penalty in Ohio. www.otse.org



Ohioans to Stop Executions have established a **People of Faith Initiative**. The aim of this Initiative is to unite religious congregations in a campaign to end the use of the death penalty in Ohio. There are various opportunities and actions offered through this Initiative, including a sign-on letter affirming support for legislation implementing reforms recommended by the Ohio Supreme Court Joint Task Force on the Administration of Ohio's Death Penalty.

To join this Initiative contact Ohioans to Stop Executions at 614-560-0654 or link to www.otse.org



An Invitation To Help End The Use of Death Penalty

We invite you to host an educational gathering regarding Catholic teachings on the death penalty.

The *People of Faith Initiative* of Ohioans to Stop Executions is also ready to work with you to bring its "Voices of Experience" program to your community. The Voices of Experience program features informative speakers, including church and civic leaders, murder victim family members who sought reconciliation instead of the death penalty, former government officials who have changed their position on the issue, and exonerated former death row inmates.

We make it easy for you to take action. You provide the setting and help share expenses to the extent possible. We will provide the speakers and materials.

Contact one of the following:

Your Diocesan Social Action Office (listed inside)

Ohioans to Stop Executions: 614-560-0654

Catholic Conference of Ohio: 614-224-7147
jtobin@ohiocathconf.org

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