



Statement of Bishop Daniel E. Thomas on the Death Penalty in the State of Ohio

Diocese of Toledo, December, 2016

In January of 2015, the State of Ohio announced a moratorium would be placed on the use of the death penalty due to the lack of availability of required drugs. This moratorium is set to be lifted on January 12, 2017, with the execution of Ronald Phillips.

In light of this development, I earnestly urge for the end of the death penalty in the State of Ohio. Our Catholic faith tradition's opposition to the death penalty does not condone gravely sinful crimes and attacks on human life perpetrated by the convicted. Yet, we do affirm the sacredness of all life, including the life of those who have committed heinous crimes.

The Catholic opposition to the death penalty is ultimately rooted in mercy and is eminently pro-life. Our opposition encourages every opportunity for conversion for the convicted, as we recognize even the greatest of sinners, through the merciful love of Jesus, can be born to new life.

Pope St. John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and more recently Pope Francis, have spoken out against the death penalty.

"Today the death penalty is inadmissible, no matter how serious the crime committed. It is an offense against the inviolability of life and the dignity of the human person, one 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." - Pope Francis, March 20, 2015

Therefore, I invite all Catholics and people of good will to take the following steps before executions resume in the State of Ohio: pray for the victims of crime, those facing execution, and those working in the criminal justice system; reach out to the families of those affected by violent crime by bringing Christ's love and compassion; learn about the Church's teaching on capital punishment and educate others in this vital area of concern; advocate for the end of the death penalty by contacting Governor John Kasich to urge clemency for all 139 individuals on death row in the State of Ohio.

Together, let us build a culture of life by witnessing to the inviolable sacredness of each and every human life. For it is through the witness of our Lord Jesus Christ, we can find the strength, even after the most horrific of crimes, to allow mercy to have the final word. Together, let us abolish the death penalty once and for all in the State of Ohio.