



STATEMENT ON THE DEATH PENALTY IN OHIO CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF OHIO

February 7, 2011

The Catholic Bishops of Ohio agree with recent comments made by both Ohio Supreme Court Justice Paul Pfeifer and former Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections Director Terry Collins that Ohio's elected legislative leaders ought to debate and ultimately abolish the death penalty.

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. Our Church teachings consider the death penalty to be wrong in almost all cases. Every human being is a child of God, no matter what sins the person commits. Every human life has infinite dignity because it is designed by God to be immortal.

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. Life imprisonment respects the moral view that all life, even that of the worst offender, has value and dignity.

We concur with Judge Pfeifer that today is an "opportune time in Ohio to seriously debate and discuss whether or not we have the death penalty". We urge Governor Kasich, Attorney General DeWine, and our elected legislative leaders to pursue such debate. Fair and effective punishment is possible without the death penalty.

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Most Rev. Richard G. Lennon
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Most Rev. Roger W. Gries
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Most Rev. Frederick F. Campbell
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Most Rev. John Kudrick
Bishop of Byzantine Eparchy of Parma

Most Rev. R. Daniel Conlon
Bishop of Steubenville

Most Rev. Leonard P. Blair
Bishop of Toledo

Most Rev. George V. Murry S.J.
Bishop of Youngstown

Most Rev. J. Michael Botean
Bishop of Romanian Eparchy of Canton

Most Rev. John Bura
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**The Catholic Conference of Ohio
supports legislation to replace Ohio's
death penalty with life-without-parole.**

CATHOLIC CONFERENCE OF OHIO

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