

Culture of Life Ministry Corner

Catholic Teaching on the Death Penalty



Traditionally, the Church accepted the death penalty as legitimate punishment in certain cases, but this has evolved over time. Most recent, Pope Francis clarified the Church's position on the death penalty which has been updated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Paragraph 2267. The Church teaches, in light of the Gospel, that the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person and the Church works with determination for its abolition worldwide. The reasons for the change are: (1) The dignity of human life - even guilty people retain their fundamental human dignity; (2) Modern prison systems effectively protect society; (3) The Church emphasizes the possibility of conversion and redemption and (4) The risk of executing innocent people would be eliminated.

“Our witness to respect for life shines most brightly when we demand respect for each and every human life, including the lives of those who fail to show respect for others. The antidote to violence is love, not more violence.” – USCCB, *Living the Gospel of Life: A Challenge to American Catholics* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1998), no. 22

For more information visit the USCCB website at:

<https://www.usccb.org/resources/culture-life-and-penalty-death>