

HolyTrinityDayton.org/parishcouncil/socialaction

Education/ Social Action Commission

Meets the first
Sunday of every
other month at
9:45am in the Parish
Office

Next meeting is
August 1, 2021

Readings & Resources

"Evangelium Vitae"
(The Gospel of Life)
can be found at
www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae.html

Catholic teaching
about the death
penalty is found in the
"Catechism of the
Catholic Church" in
Part 3, Article 5, The
Fifth Commandment,
no. 2267.

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

Focus Topic: Death Penalty Abolishment

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching. In our society, human life is under direct attack from abortion and euthanasia. The value of human life is being threatened by cloning, embryonic stem cell research, and the use of the death penalty. The intentional targeting of civilians in war or terrorist attacks is always wrong. Catholic teaching also calls on us to work to avoid war. Nations must protect the right to life by finding increasingly effective ways to prevent conflicts and resolve them by peaceful means. We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.

<https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/seven-themes-of-catholic-social-teaching>

Catholic Teaching about the Death Penalty:

The following is provided by Michael R. Merz, United States Magistrate Judge, and Holy Trinity parishioner.

Traditional Catholic acceptance of the death penalty has been based on the just war theory, the belief that a nation can take up arms to defend itself when attacked. As a corollary of that theory, the Church has accepted personal self-defense when attacked and justified the death penalty as society's needed action to protect itself from the most violent criminals.

The changes at a papal level begin with "*Evangelium Vitae*" (*The Gospel of Life*) of Pope John Paul II. That encyclical argued for a consistent ethic of protection of life as the highest social value. It was, of course, strongly anti-abortion, but John Paul II also wrote:

"... the nature and extent of the punishment ought not to go to the extreme of executing the offender, except in cases of absolute necessity: in other words, when it would not be possible otherwise to defend society. Today, however, as a result of steady improvements in the organization of the penal system, such cases are very rare if not practically nonexistent."

**Evangelium Vitae, no. 56, March 25, 1995.*

Teaching of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and of Pope John Paul II is reinforced by the universal "*Catechism of the Catholic Church*" no. 2267. Both Popes Benedict XVI and Francis have stated very clearly that in their judgment, bloodless means, i.e. imprisonment, are sufficient in the conditions of modern society.



For more information, visit:

Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center at <https://ijpccincinnati.org/programs/death-penalty>

Archbishop Schnurr's "Letter to the Faithful in Support of SB103" can be found at <https://catholicaoc.org/news/from-the-archbishop/letter-to-the-faithful-in-support-of-ohio-state-bill-103>

Catholic Conference of Ohio: www.ohiocathconf.org/issues/category/death-penalty

Ohioans to Stop Executions: <https://otse.org>



Other Sources:

Scripture:

Genesis 2:7, 21-23 – Every life is precious, a gift from God.

Exodus 21: 23-25 – "Eye for an eye" meant to limit retribution, not to require a minimum punishment.

Romans 12:17 – "Do not repay injury with injury."

US Conference of Catholic Bishops: https://www.usccb.org/committees/domestic-justice-and-human-development/death-penalty-capital-punishment#tab--_021

ACTION

Abolish the Death Penalty in Ohio

Ohio Senate Bill (SB) 103 and House Bill (HB) 183

Ohio's use of the death penalty is a violation of the sanctity of life and an assault on human dignity. Thankfully, the time is upon us when we can abolish it. Your help is needed! Governor DeWine has indicated that he will sign an abolishment bill that comes to his desk.

A "Letter to the Faithful" was released on June 18 from the Catholic Conference of Ohio, to which Archbishop Schnurr is the chair, in support of SB 103. See sidebar for the link.

Click on **Action Alerts** at the Ohio Catholic Conference to ask Ohio law makers to abolish the death penalty in Ohio. <https://www.ohiocathconf.org/issues/category/legislative-action-alerts>



Contact your Ohio State Legislators from the Dayton Area

Ohio House of Representatives:

- Willis E. Blackshear, Dayton, District 39 (614) 466-1607
- Phil Plummer, Huber Heights, District 40 (614) 644-8051
- Andrea White, Kettering, District 41 (614) 644-6008
- Tom Young, West Carrollton, Miamisburg, District 42 (614) 466-6504
- Rodney Creech, Trotwood, District 43 (614) 466-2960
- Brian E. Lampton, Beaver Creek, Fairborn, District 73 (614) 644-6020

Ohio Senate:

- Steven A. Huffmann, District 5 (614) 466-6247
- Niraj Antani, District 6 (614) 466-4538
- Steve Wilson, District 7 (614) 466-9737
- Bob D. Hackett, District 10 (614) 466-3780



Final Thoughts

The death penalty is one of the great moral issues facing our country, yet most people rarely think about it and very few of us take the time to delve deeply enough into this issue to be able to make an informed decision about it.

- Sr. Helen Prejean, C.S.J.