



# SUPPORT Repeal of the Death Penalty

The Catholic Diocese of Salt Lake City urges Legislators to support legislation repealing the death penalty. Taking a human life is not a decision that should be left to any individual or state. The Diocese encourages legislators to seriously discuss whether the death penalty should be an option in our state for the following reasons:

**Human dignity demands that we treat prisoners as people.** The death penalty provides no incentive for inmates to rehabilitate, reform, or engage in restorative justice. No human being should be denied these opportunities, no matter how heinous the crime, unless there is no other means to protect public safety.

**The death penalty focuses disproportionate attention on the person to be executed rather than the crime victims.** The image of a human being as a bulls-eye attracted extensive media attention during our last execution in 2010. While local, national, and international press focused on the execution, the story of the crime victims was completely lost. Restorative justice requires that we focus on the impacts of a crime on victims, including society at large. Through execution we create a new victim rather than restoring communities impacted by violent crime.

**The death penalty serves no legitimate purpose.** For the past several years, lawmakers have admitted the only reason to maintain the death penalty in Utah is revenge. The state should not be in the business of torture or revenge. The state's interest is public safety and justice, interests which can be more than adequately achieved without the death penalty.

**No execution is just.** In Biblical times, death could not be ordered without a unanimous vote of 26 judges with 100% certainty of guilt. Even under these terms, we recognize that the taking the life of a person who is unarmed and, for all intents and purposes, incapacitated is never just. We punish individuals who do so, that the state is conducting the execution does not render the act of intentionally taking the life of another any less reprehensible. This is not justice, it is pure vengeance.

The death penalty “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. . . . When the death penalty is applied, it is not for a current act of aggression, but rather for an act committed in the past. It is also applied to persons whose current ability to cause harm is not current, as it has been neutralized--they are already deprived of their liberty.”

Pope Francis