

## CONNECTICUT CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

134 FARMINGTON AVENUE, HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06105

MARIE T. HILLIARD, J.C.L., PH.D.  
Executive Director

DEACON DAVID W. REYNOLDS, M.P.A.  
Legislative Liaison

TELEPHONE (860) 524-7882  
FAX (860) 525-0750  
ccc@ctcatholic.org  
www.ctcatholic.org

### STATEMENT OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF CONNECTICUT

by

**Most Reverend Christie A. Macaluso, Auxiliary Bishop of Hartford**

**January 12, 2005**

I am Bishop Christie A. Macaluso, Auxiliary Bishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Hartford. I am here representing the eight Roman Catholic Bishops of Connecticut, to express our one united voice in support of the abolition of the death penalty in Connecticut.

The Gospel mandates us to respect all human life from conception to natural death. Over the years, the Bishops of Connecticut consistently have advocated for the abolition of the death penalty. At the present time there is an ongoing debate about the appropriateness of the death penalty as a means of punishment for convicted perpetrators of grave crimes. This debate has intensified in Connecticut as we face the possibility of our first execution in forty-five years. Aware of the serious moral implications of the use of the death penalty as a means of punishment for convicted perpetrators of grave crimes, the Roman Catholic Bishops of Connecticut consider it imperative to make our voices heard once again on this important issue.

First, we wish to state that we are deeply concerned for the just and fair treatment of all parties in this matter: the victims and their families, and those who have been accused or convicted of grave crimes. Next, we are motivated by the consistent ethic of life. We wish to make clear that, in accord with the teaching of Pope John Paul II, respect for human life must be "profoundly consistent." (*Evangelium vitae*, #87). Human life is a gift from God that must be respected from conception to natural death. Thus, we oppose capital punishment. Our profound respect for human life also explains why we are so involved in such matters as providing goods and services to the poor, the elderly and the sick. Specifically in regard to capital punishment, we note increasing reliance on the death penalty, which diminishes each of us. The death penalty offers the tragic illusion that we can defend life only by taking life.

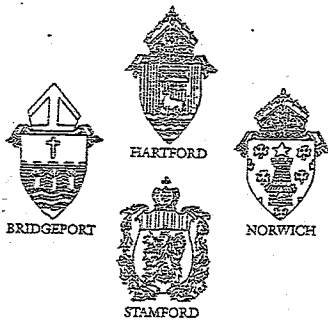
We are guided by what Pope John Paul II wrote in his encyclical letter on the value and inviolability of human life (*Evangelium vitae*). Our Holy Father states that authority must

redress the violation of personal and social rights by imposing on the offender an adequate punishment for the crime. In this way, authority also fulfills the purpose of defending public order and ensuring people's safety while offering the offender an incentive to help change his or her behavior and be rehabilitated. Our Holy Father states:

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*, #56).

Recent highly publicized court cases have raised serious doubts concerning the effectiveness of our criminal justice system in detecting the true source and nature of crimes that have been committed, and in protecting the rights and dignity of those who have been accused of them. Moreover, we are not comfortable with the fact that so many of those in prisons and on death row are poor, young and minorities. They are less likely than others to be able to avail themselves of legal talent, as are those with more resources.

In conclusion, while conceding that the state has the duty to maintain public order and the right to punish convicted criminals, we, the Roman Catholic Bishops of Connecticut, express our considered opposition to the death penalty in the State of Connecticut. We join with the other leaders of faith communities, here present, and with the Connecticut Network to Abolish the Death Penalty, in this concerted effort to abolish the death penalty in Connecticut.



## CONNECTICUT CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

134 FARMINGTON AVENUE, HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06105

MARIE T. HILLIARD, PH.D.  
Executive Director

TELEPHONE (860) 524-7882  
FAX (860) 525-0750

### Statement of the Catholic Bishops of Connecticut Regarding Capital Punishment April 2, 1999

A few weeks ago, when the Holy Father visited Saint Louis, the headlines and news coverage focused on his call to end the death penalty. This concerned some Catholics and pleased others. Many were surprised and confused.

Many Catholics were unaware of how and why the Church's opposition to the death penalty has grown. On Good Friday, the day we remember the execution of Jesus Christ, our Bishops' Conference re-released its statement, which summarizes why our faith calls us to reject the violence of capital punishment. We share it with you in the hope that you might use it to reexamine your own attitudes on this difficult and contentious issue.

At the present time there is in our State of Connecticut an ongoing debate about the appropriateness of the death penalty as a means of punishment for convicted perpetrators of grave crimes. This debate will intensify as we face the possibility of the first execution in over thirty years. Aware of the serious ethical implications of this discussion, we, the Catholic Bishops of Connecticut, consider it imperative that we make known Catholic moral tradition regarding this issue.

In discussing this subject, we wish to make clear at the outset that we are deeply concerned for the just and fair treatment of all parties in this matter--the victims, their families, those who have been accused of grave crimes, and those who have been convicted of them. While criminals who constitute a serious danger to the well being of other citizens must be impeded from their criminal activities, justice is not served when the rights of anyone--victims or transgressors --are in any manner compromised.

In regard to taking the life of a convicted capital felon, we are guided by what Pope John Paul II wrote in his encyclical letter, *Evangelium Vitae*, on the value and inviolability of human life:

Public authority must redress the violation of personal and social rights by imposing on the offender an adequate punishment for the crime, as a condition for the offender to gain the exercise of his or her freedom. In this way authority also fulfills the purpose of defending public order and ensuring people's safety, while at the same time offering the offender an incentive to help to change his or her behavior and to be rehabilitated

It is evident to us that the incarcerated capital felon presents little or no threat to society.

Furthermore, recent, highly publicized court cases have raised serious doubts in the minds of many about the effectiveness of our criminal justice system in detecting the true nature of crimes that have been committed and in protecting the rights and dignity of those who have been accused of them. Aware of the very fallible nature of this system, we are deeply concerned about the possibility of the state's calling for the execution of individuals who are, in reality, innocent.

Moreover, we are not comfortable with the fact that so many of those in prisons and on death row are poor, young, and minorities, and therefore less likely than others to be able to avail themselves of effective legal talent to defend themselves in court.

Similarly, we are mindful of the fact that there is a growing conviction among experts in the field that such means of punishment as life imprisonment and long-term sentences can be as strong deterrents to crime as capital punishment.

We wish to make clear that, in accord with the teaching of Pope John Paul II, respect for human life must be "profoundly consistent." (*Evangelium Vitae*, #87)  
Consequently those who serve as advocates for the elimination of the death penalty should also oppose all other threats to human life and dignity such as abortion, euthanasia and physician - assisted suicide, as well as ill considered cuts in programs of state government which might harm the poor, the sick or the elderly.

In conclusion, while conceding that the state has the duty to maintain public order and the right to punish convicted criminals, we express our considered opposition to the death penalty in the State of Connecticut at this time.

+ Daniel A. Cronin

Most Reverend Daniel A. Cronin, STD  
Archbishop of Hartford

Daniel A. Hart

Most Reverend Daniel A. Hart, DD  
Bishop of Norwich

Peter A. Rosazza

Most Reverend Peter A. Rosazza, DD  
Auxiliary Bishop of Hartford

Edward M. Egan

Most Reverend Edward M. Egan, JCD  
Bishop of Bridgeport

Basil H. Losten

Most Reverend Basil H. Losten, STL, DD  
Bishop of Stamford

+ Christie A. Macaluso

Most Reverend Christie Macaluso, DD  
Auxiliary Bishop of Hartford