

Cardinal George Releases Lenten Statement On Death Penalty Moratorium

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Archdiocese of Chicago*

During Holy Week we are called to enter into the mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This significant week is therefore an appropriate time to call on the legislative leaders of Illinois to abolish the death penalty itself as the surest way to avoid the killing of innocent people.

Governor Ryan showed great courage in imposing a moratorium on the death penalty, and with his action made national and international news. The 13 innocent men who have been exonerated have gone through their own death and resurrection experiences. Now is the time to appeal to the task force reviewing the death penalty to recommend that the death penalty is no longer a viable option in an imperfect justice system.

Pope John Paul II has pointed out that civilized societies have ways of protecting themselves against criminals short of killing them.

I have spoken against the death penalty a number of times, including last September to a committee considering the moratorium. The Illinois Bishops issued a statement in 1995 stating there are more effective ways of protecting the good of society than through capital punishment. We are called in Illinois, with God's grace, to move beyond vengeance and to end the cycle of violence.

In this Jubilee Year 2000, we are especially called to forgiveness and healing.