



Arizona Catholic Conference

Diocese of Gallup • Diocese of Phoenix • Diocese of Tucson

Arizona Catholic Conference Bishops’ Statement Opposing the Death Penalty

March 28, 2011

At the outset of this statement, we express our compassion for those who are victims of brutal crimes and for their families. The effects of murder, in particular, are truly awful for families, and we pray for the healing of all those who grieve and suffer because of murder.

As Arizona approaches two scheduled executions, we are compelled to express again our opposition to the use of the death penalty in our state.

We firmly hold that capital punishment is state-sanctioned vengeance that is not in keeping with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We hold that capital punishment – when other means are available to keep society safe from dangerous criminals – denies the intrinsic dignity and sanctity of human life.

The commission of a heinous crime, especially one in which a life has been taken, should result in punishment.

But, the use of the death penalty – when other means are available to keep society safe – is actually a contribution to a “culture of death.” It is an act of eye-for-an-eye vengeance that contradicts the values of our nation and that denies the dignity and sanctity of human life.

Pope John Paul II, an ardent defender of human life on the world stage, articulated that the use of capital punishment should be limited only to extremely rare situations where it is necessary to defend society (*Evangelium Vitae*, #56).

Executions in our state do not defend anyone, and are therefore wrong.

MORE

We, the Catholic Bishops of Arizona, call for an end to the unnecessary violence of the death penalty.

We pray that the dignity and sanctity of human life at every stage be respected and protected.

+ James S. Wall

Most Rev. James S. Wall
Bishop of Gallup

+ Gerald Kicanas

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