

TILL DEATH DO US PART: END THE DEATH PENALTY

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion
(IS 5:4-7, PHIL 2:6-11, LK 22:14 - 23:56)

Affirming the dignity of all people, even criminals, Pope Francis called again for an end to the death penalty. He added that a penal system that is increasingly conformed to God's vision for humanity does not allow for depriving criminals of a chance to redeem themselves.

Catholics are called to compassion to the absolute end. We cherish the priceless virtues of repentance, reconciliation and redemption. Persons must have an entire life to convert. The death penalty impedes the possibility of God's grace and redemption in a prisoner's life, the length of which must be determined by God, not man.

In today's Gospel, we witness a reconciliation of man with God:

As Jesus hung on the cross, one criminal on his left and another on his right, "the other [criminal] ... said, '... we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.'

He replied to him, 'Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'"

In 1902, an Italian 12-year-old girl was mortally wounded by a 20-year-old neighbor who intended to rape her. On her deathbed, Saint Maria Goretti forgave the attacker, Alessandro Serenelli.

Serenelli spent decades in prison. Eventually, he was freed and sought the forgiveness of the family.

Serenelli attended Maria Goretti's canonization in 1950.

Pope Francis said this Jubilee of Mercy is a good occasion to promote a growing maturity in respect for life and human dignity, and said that all Christians are called to work for the abolition of the death penalty.

Though Catholics' opinion on the death penalty mirror the country's attitudes, we - who recognize that all life is sacred - are ready for the challenge to abolish the death penalty
Isaiah's words are meant for all and to rouse our determination:

"The Lord GOD has given me a well-trained tongue, that I might know how to speak to the weary a word that will rouse them."

"I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who plucked my beard; my face I did not shield from buffets and spitting."

"The Lord GOD is my help, therefore I am not disgraced; I have set my face like flint, knowing that I shall not be put to shame."

With raised voices and increased courage, we will protect all life. Ensuring that all "thieves" can share in God's kingdom, Catholics can provide a chance for redemption within God's timeframe, not ours.

Beginning in this Jubilee Year of Mercy, let us unite as Catholics and help bring an to end the death penalty.

