

## Homiletic Suggestion – Respect Life – Georgia House Bill #702

### Abolish the Death Penalty & Commute all existing Death Penalty Sentences to Life without Parole

**Background:** The Archdiocese Death Penalty Task Force Team met about the proposed bipartisan bill #702, to abolish the Death Penalty in the state of Georgia, as a form of punishment, specifically, **“...the imposition of capital punishment is prohibited in this state. The sentence of any person under sentence of death on the effective date of this Code section shall be commuted to a sentence of life without parole.”** (*source: H. B. 702*) **As merciful Catholics, we must support this bill.**

**Introduction:** “Because the world in which we live is so often hostile to the Truth, proclaiming the Gospel of Life can be difficult. In many arenas, defense of infants’ lives, the lives of those who are disabled or dying, or the lives of any vulnerable human population is met with resistance. Proclaiming the Church’s teaching on topics like abortion, assisted suicide, and the death penalty can provoke challenging and emotional responses from those who disagree. Sometimes we may find ourselves afraid to speak up about these issues in our families, among our coworkers, or with students in our school community. We may fear disagreement, judgement, confrontation, or misunderstanding. St. Paul tells us that ‘God did not give us a spirit of cowardice.’ Rather, God has given us a spirit of ‘power and love’—and this should cast out our fear. St. Paul encourages us to ‘not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord.’ He urges us to ‘bear your share of hardship for the gospel,’ and reminds us of our ‘strength that comes from God.’” (*source: [http://www.usccb.org/\\_cs\\_upload/about/pro-life-activities/respect-life-program/2019/287232\\_1.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/_cs_upload/about/pro-life-activities/respect-life-program/2019/287232_1.pdf)*).

1. Catholics respect life from the moment of conception to natural death.
2. Statistics
  - a. 25 Death Row prisoners were executed in the United States in 2018.
  - b. 166 Death Row prisoners have been executed in the United States since 1973 who were later found to be innocent, using new DNA technology and other evidence.
  - c. Enforcing the Death Penalty will not prevent someone from killing another human being. The Death Penalty does not reduce crime. Taxpayers pay for the enforcement of the Death Penalty – can cost millions of dollars to execute one inmate; cost varies by state.
  - d. In a 2010 research poll, over 61% prefer some other form of punishment, other than the Death Penalty. There are 29 Death Penalty States; 21 Non-Death Penalty States.
3. Death Penalty Movement in the United States
  - a. There are some efforts in the Catholic Church to abolish the Death Penalty, but clearly, there are still states which offer this form of punishment.
  - b. The Death Penalty is not a humane form of punishment, and is equal to that of Saudi Arabia, Iran and Iraq, a barbaric form of punishment. The inmate is already serving his punishment by being incarcerated. The additional punishment of executing the person is not merciful. Why must these inmates be executed?
  - c. Enforcement of the Death Penalty is not the way of Jesus. His way is mercy. His way overturned the Old Testament teaching of an “eye-for-an-eye vengeance.”

- d. Pope Francis tells us there are no valid reasons to carry out the Death Penalty; he modified the church's position on this issue to state that there is no valid reason to execute a person on Death Row.
4. How can our parish learn more about why the Death Penalty should be abolished, and why existing sentences should be commuted to Life without Parole?
  - a. Download printable documents from the Death Penalty Information Center online, to educate the parish on the facts surrounding this issue.
  - b. Talk with other Catholics about respecting life from conception to natural Death.
  - c. Learn the facts together.
  - d. Share the facts with others.
  - e. Vote your Christian conscience at the ballot box. Vote for true, practicing Christian leaders who advocate for life during all stages of life. If they say they are pro-life, ask them "What does that mean to you?"
  - f. Become supportive members of pro-life organizations such as Catholic Mobilizing Network and others
  - g. Learn more about Restorative Justice efforts with victims, instead of enforcing the Death Penalty as a solution.
  - h. Encourage parishes to start a letter writing campaign to their congressional representatives to end the Death Penalty and commute all sentences to life without parole.
  - i. Encourage prayers and novenas for an end to the Death Penalty, to commute existing sentences to life without parole.
  - j. Encourage prayers and novenas for the inmates, the victims and their families.
5. Please select any of the above ideas to implement in your parish as permanent, reoccurring actions, until the Death Penalty has been abolished.

Conclusion. "Life and Dignity of the Human Person. The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of the moral vision for society. Our belief in the sanctity of human life and the inherent dignity of the human person is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching. In our society human life is under direct attack from abortion and assisted suicide. The value of human life is being threatened by [increasing] use of the death penalty (statistically, has decreased; however, the practice still exists). We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person." (*source: United States Catechism for Adults, copyright 2006, Chapter 31, pages 422-423*)

Other Source: Death Penalty Information Center, [www.deathpenaltyinfo.org](http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org)