

# MARYLAND'S DEATH PENALTY



**CATHOLIC  
MOBILIZING  
NETWORK**

ENDING THE DEATH PENALTY.  
PROMOTING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE.

## The Facts

- Maryland abolished the death penalty in 2013.
- The state passed a law prohibiting the execution of juveniles in 1987, also implementing life without parole as a possible sentencing for capital crimes.
- In 1989, a provision banning the execution of intellectually disabled individuals was passed.
- In 2002, Maryland declared a moratorium.
- Implemented the toughest restrictions on the death penalty in the country in 2009.
- Originally, public hanging was used as the primary method of execution until 1913, when they were moved to private settings.
- The gas chamber was briefly used as a method of execution for four individuals.
- In 1994, lethal injection became the primary method of execution.
- No one was executed in Maryland from 1961 until 1994.

## Maryland's Bishop Applauds Abolition of Death Penalty

Archbishop Lori of Baltimore's statement following Maryland's passage of the law to abolish the death penalty:  
"I applaud the Maryland General Assembly for choosing to meet evil not with evil, but with a justice worthy of our best nature as human beings. As people of faith who live in a civilized Nation, we recognize that those who have done great harm to others deserve punishment. However, we must also recognize that every life has value and that we cannot overcome crime by executing criminals, nor can we restore the lives of the innocent by ending the lives of those convicted of their murders." (2013)

## MARYLAND'S EXONEREES

Kirk Bloodsworth was exonerated after spending nine years in prison. After two years on death row, his sentence was changed to life in prison without parole. Bloodsworth adamantly proclaimed himself to be an innocent man and was finally exonerated after the finding of DNA evidence confirming his innocence.

## MARYLAND GOVERNORS COMMUTE SENTENCES

Governor Parris Glendening commuted the death sentence of Eugene Colvin-El, noting that being "almost certain" someone had committed a crime was not sufficient to justify the death penalty. Governor Martin O'Malley commuted the death sentence of the four remaining death row inmates in Maryland to life in prison without parole in 2015.

# The Church and State Speak

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## The Church Speaks

### Catechism of the Catholic Church

"The Church teaches, in the light of the Gospel, that "the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person",[1] and she works with determination for its abolition worldwide." (CCC 2267)

### *Evangelium Vitae*

Pope St. John Paul II's encyclical on human dignity, challenges us to be "unconditionally pro-life.": "The case of someone who has done great evil. Modern society has the means of protecting itself, without definitively denying criminals the chance to reform." (*Evangelium Vitae*, 27)

### United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

"Its [the death penalty] application is deeply flawed and can be irreversibly wrong, is prone to errors and is biased by factors such as race, the quality of legal representation and where the crime was committed." (*A Culture of Life and the Penalty of Death*, USCCB, 2005)

### Words of the Popes

**Pope Francis:** "Rendering justice' does not mean seeking punishment for its own sake, but ensuring that the basic purpose of all punishment is the rehabilitation of the offender." *World Congress Against the Death Penalty*, June 22, 2016

**Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI:** "Society's leaders should make every effort to eliminate the death penalty and to reform the penal system in a way that ensures respect for the prisoners' human dignity." *Benin, Africa*, Nov. 19, 2011



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## The States Speak

### Innocence

- Nationally, over 160 people have been exonerated from death row.
- For every nine executions carried out in the United States, one person has been found to be innocent.

### Racial Bias

- 76% of death row defendants have been executed for killing white victims, even though African-Americans make up about half of all homicide victims.
- African-Americans are overrepresented on death row. They make up 13% of the US population but constitute 42% of death row.

### Criminalization of Mental Illness and Intellectual Disabilities

- A study in the *Hastings Law Journal* of recent executions found that "over half of the last one hundred executed offenders have been diagnosed with or displayed symptoms of mental illness."
- The Supreme Court banned the execution of those with intellectual disabilities but states have significantly deviated from accepted clinical methods for determining intellectual disability.

### Overrepresentation of the Poor

- The majority of individuals on death row could not afford their own attorney. In many cases, the appointed attorneys are overworked, underpaid, or lacking the trial experience required for death penalty cases.

### Costly Public Policy

- Multiple studies have shown the cost of trial sentencing, appeals and imprisonment to be much higher in capital cases versus life in prison without parole.

### Geographic Basis

- 2% of all U.S. counties have produced 56% of the U.S. death row population