

OKLAHOMA'S DEATH PENALTY



**CATHOLIC
MOBILIZING
NETWORK**

ENDING THE DEATH PENALTY.
PROMOTING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE.

The Facts

- 48 people currently on death row
- 113 executions since 1976
- 132 executions before 1976
- Jury decides the sentence
- Life without parole is a sentencing option
- Method of execution: Lethal injection, firing squad, and electrocution are permitted
- 10 innocent persons released from death row
- 4 clemencies have been granted

Cruel and Unusual Punishment

In April of 2014, the State of Oklahoma executed Clayton Lockett. Due to a shortage of standard lethal drugs, he was given a previously untested combination. When Lockett remained alive after injection, struggling against restraints and trying to speak, it was discovered that his vein had collapsed, and that the drugs were sending him into seizures.

After a second dose of drugs were administered, Lockett suffered a major heart attack. Although there was a medical team working on him, they did not attempt CPR. Lockett was pronounced dead nearly two hours after his execution had begun.

Oklahoma Bishops Stand Against Capital Punishment

"Taking the life of a guilty person does not restore the loss of a loved one, nor does it honor their memory. The death penalty only further erodes our respect for the sanctity of life. It coarsens our culture and diminishes our humanity." Archbishop Paul S. Coakley,
April 13, 2015

THE SENTENCING OF INNOCENTS

Curtis McCarty of Oklahoma City was arrested in 1985 on suspicion of murder because of his closeness to the victim. He was convicted based on the testimony of a forensic analyst, who claimed that the hair, blood, and sperm found at the crime scene matched McCarty's. The same analyst was later fired for forensic fraud. When investigators asked her to produce the evidence used in the McCarty case, she was unable to, having destroyed or willfully lost it. McCarty was released after 19 years on death row, and his innocence was acknowledged.

The Church and State Speak

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' 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.

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