

## Parish Suggestions to Support Repeal of the Death Penalty

A bill has been introduced in the New Hampshire Legislature to repeal the state death penalty. Pope John Paul II challenged followers of Christ to be “unconditionally pro life.” (*Evangelium Vitae* 28). He reminded us that “the dignity of human life must never be taken away, even in 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).

Often, proponents of the death penalty claim that the death penalty is needed to help the families of murder victims. Organizations such as Murder Victims’ Families for Reconciliation and Murder Victims’ Families for Human Rights oppose the death penalty because the lengthy legal process delays the time when real healing can begin, resources and attention spent on the death penalty could be better spent supporting victims and preventing crime, and the risk of executing an innocent person is too high a price to pay. As Bishop Peter A. Libasci recently said, “the death penalty neither deters others, nor brings this perpetrator to understanding, but instead, in the worst of ironies, publicly validates the very act of taking a human life.”

Here are examples of activities for parishes interested in supporting repeal of the death penalty:

1. Incorporate ***intercessory prayers*** such as:

For those on death row that their lives may be spared, that the innocent may be freed, and that those who have committed great harm may seek reconciliation.

For victims of violence and their families that they may experience our love and support and find comfort in God’s compassion and the promise of eternal life.

For our elected officials that they may commit themselves to upholding the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death, including support for repeal of capital punishment.

2. Share with your parishioners a ***bulletin insert*** explaining Church teaching on the death penalty that is available by [clicking here](#).
3. Visit the website of Catholic Mobilizing Network to End the Use of the Death Penalty at [www.catholicmobilizing.org](http://www.catholicmobilizing.org) for educational and prayer resources.
4. Encourage your parishioners to contact their elected officials to express support for the bill to repeal the death penalty. Visit [www.catholicnh.org/deathpenalty](http://www.catholicnh.org/deathpenalty) to learn more, including a link to find the contact information for state legislators. A ***bulletin announcement*** such as this sample is one way to encourage parishioners to take action:

Contact Your Elected Officials and Urge Support for Repeal of the Death Penalty  
NH lawmakers will be taking up a bill to repeal NH’s death penalty. Catholic teaching on the death penalty begins with the recognition that the dignity of the human person applies to everyone. Learn more at [catholicnh.org/deathpenalty](http://catholicnh.org/deathpenalty), including a link to find the contact information for your state legislators so you can urge them to support the bill to repeal NH’s death penalty.