



## Statement In Opposition to the Death Penalty February 6, 2018

We speak in opposition to the use of the death penalty in any form and to its possible reinstatement in Iowa.

Marking the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church last fall, Pope Francis said the death penalty is, in itself, “contrary to the Gospel, because a decision is voluntarily made to suppress a human life, which is always sacred in the eyes of the Creator and of whom, in the last analysis, only God can be the true judge and guarantor.”

It is a duty of the state to punish offenders and defend the common good. However, in a modern society where the death penalty is not needed to maintain public safety, punishment must “correspond to the concrete conditions of the common good and [be] more in conformity to the dignity of the human person,” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2267). For example, in Iowa, a conviction of first-degree murder means life in prison without parole.

In addition, the application of the death penalty has been deeply flawed in our country:

- More than 160 persons have been found innocent while on death row. It is likely that innocent persons have been executed.
- There is racial bias. More than three-fourths of death row defendants have been executed for killing white victims, even though African-Americans make up about half of all homicide victims.
- The use of the death penalty is a long and costly process, more expensive than life without parole.

We oppose reinstatement of the death penalty in order to send the message that the cycle of violence can be broken without taking life. We ask the people of Iowa, and especially members of the Catholic Church, to join us in opposing capital punishment out of respect for our common human dignity and in light of the teachings of Jesus about vengeance.

Most Rev. Michael Jackels  
Archbishop of Dubuque

Most Rev. Thomas Zinkula  
Bishop of Davenport

Most Rev. R. Walker Nickless  
Bishop of Sioux City

Most Rev. Richard Pates  
Bishop of Des Moines