

unable to cause harm. For this reason, those who legitimately hold authority also have the right to use arms to repel aggressors against the civil community entrusted to their responsibility.

- 2266 The efforts of the state to curb the spread of behavior harmful to people's rights and to the basic rules of civil society correspond  
 1897-1898 to the requirement of safeguarding the common good. Legitimate public authority has the right and the duty to inflict punishment proportionate to the gravity of the offense. Punishment has the primary aim of redressing the disorder introduced by the offense.  
 2308 When it is willingly accepted by the guilty party, it assumes the value of expiation. Punishment then, in addition to defending public order and protecting people's safety, has a medicinal purpose: as far as possible, it must contribute to the correction of the guilty party.<sup>67</sup>

2267 Recourse to the death penalty on the part of legitimate authority, following a fair trial, was long considered an appropriate response to the gravity of certain crimes and an acceptable, albeit extreme, means of safeguarding the common good.

- 2306 Today, however, there is an increasing awareness that the dignity of the person is not lost even after the commission of very serious crimes. In addition, a new understanding has emerged of the significance of penal sanctions imposed by the state. Lastly, more effective systems of detention have been developed, which ensure the due protection of citizens but, at the same time, do not definitively deprive the guilty of the possibility of redemption.

Consequently, 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",<sup>68</sup> and she works with determination for its abolition worldwide.

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<sup>67</sup> Cf. Lk 23:4-43.

<sup>68</sup> FRANCIS, *Address to Participants in the Meeting organized by the Pontifical Council of the Promotion the New Evangelization*, 11 October 2017: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 13 October 2017, 5.