

In 1999 the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia took a Corporate Stand against the death penalty which reads: "We, Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, following in the footprints of the nonviolent Jesus and the peacemaking tradition of Francis of Assisi, join Pope John Paul II, the Catholic bishops, and many others in calling for an end to the death penalty." Today, 16 years later, Pope Francis has reiterated the call of Pope John Paul II in calling once more for an end to capital punishment.

We believe that each person is created in God's image and continues to hold within this "imago Dei," this image of God regardless of whatever he or she has done. To create a just, orderly, and civilized society, laws must certainly be in place and implemented. However, law based on a "life for a life" premise bespeaks neither a civilized society nor a society that recognizes the dignity and inherent value of each individual and the possibility of repentance.

Recently I read an article about the abolition of the death penalty that posed an extremely thought-provoking question. The writer pointed out that often proponents of the death penalty justify execution by claiming that the convicted person deserves to die. The writer then suggested that the real question is not "Does he/she deserve to die" but rather "Do we, as a people, deserve to kill." I realized more fully than ever that this is one of the reasons why I am so opposed to the death penalty. As a citizen, I do not deserve to be responsible for the murder/execution of another human being. And so I say with deep conviction: "Not in my name!" Let's make Pennsylvania one of the growing number of states where the death penalty is replaced by laws that bespeak a just, orderly, and civilized society.

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