



## Statement in Opposition to the Death Penalty January 2021

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

It is a duty of the state to punish offenders and defend the common good. Nonetheless, in a modern society, “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.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 2267). The catechism adds, “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, and she works with determination for its abolition worldwide.”

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 know there is a special need to offer sympathy and support for the victims of violent crime and their families. However, 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. William Joensen  
Bishop of Des Moines