



Death Penalty

In August, Pope Francis approved [a revision to the Catechism](#) that declared the death penalty to be “inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person” (2267). While often described as a “reform” or a “change” of Church teaching, this new language actually builds on the tradition of the Church, applying it to today’s circumstances – as all social teaching does and should do. Currently, the Catechism states that the death penalty is permissible only when the state has no other means of protecting its citizens, affirming Saint John Paul II’s warning that cases of such necessity are today “very rare, if not practically non-existent.” Pope Francis, recognizing the increased ability of states to maintain order using criminal justice approaches that are better suited to that task, has affirmed this prior teaching with stronger language, based on the contemporary observance that cases that necessitate the death penalty are not “practically non-existent,” but *are* non-existent. All Catholics are thus called to work for the global abolition of capital punishment. Canada abolished the death penalty in 1976, but the United States remains the only western nation – and [one of only four “industrialized” nations](#) – to retain the death penalty. [Click here](#) for advocacy and action resources, and please join us in [prayer for an end to capital punishment](#).