

ARCHDIOCESE OF MILWAUKEE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL RESOLUTION REGARDING

“A Culture of Life and the Penalty of Death”

“**B**ut to you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well, and from the person who takes your cloak, do not withhold even your tunic.” —*Luke 6: 27-29*

“Assuming that the guilty party’s identity and responsibility have been fully determined, the traditional teaching of the Church does not exclude recourse to the death penalty, if this is the only possible way of effectively defending human lives against the unjust aggressor.

“If, however, non-lethal means are sufficient to defend and protect people’s safety from the aggressor, authority will limit itself to such means, as these are more in keeping with the concrete conditions of the common good and more in conformity with the dignity of the human person.” —*Catechism of the Catholic Church, article number 2267*

“... there is a growing tendency, both in the Church and in civil society, to demand that it be applied in a very limited way or even that it be abolished completely. The problem must be viewed in the context of a system of penal justice ever more in line with human dignity and thus, in the end, with God’s plan for man and society.” —*Pope John Paul II, Evangelium vitae, 1995*

Whereas the Roman Catholic Church has articulated a moral position that has grown in the depth of its opposition to the Death Penalty and in its preference for other means of protecting public order that are more in conformity with the dignity of the human person (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, article number 2267*); and...

Whereas Pope John Paul II spoke vigorously against the Death Penalty, noting a “growing tendency, both in the church and in civil society, to demand that it be applied in a very limited way or even that it be abolished completely” (*Evangelium Vitae, article number 56*); and...

Whereas the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops initiated a major formational / media campaign to “bring greater urgency and unity, increased energy and advocacy, and a renewed call to our people and to our leaders to end the use of the Death Penalty in our nation” (Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, March 2005); and...

Whereas the Bishops of the United States united in support at their annual fall meeting in November of 2005 to issue the document “*A Culture of Life and the Penalty of Death*” to call for an end to the use of Capital Punishment; and...

Whereas the Bishops of the state of Wisconsin have raised a strong voice in opposition to the Death Penalty, noting that “Restoration of Capital Punishment is incompatible with the consistent life ethic and with Wisconsin’s Progressive traditions” (“*Capital Punishment In Wisconsin*” – A Statement From The State’s Roman Catholic Bishops, June 1995); and...

Whereas certain legislators recently have circulated a proposal that would seek to apply the Death Penalty in the state of Wisconsin to specific cases; and...

Whereas leadership within the state senate has indicated openness to the possibility of authorizing an advisory referendum in the near future on the issue restoring the Death Penalty in Wisconsin; and...

Whereas a recent poll of the residents of the state indicate that more than two-thirds of Wisconsinites approve of Capital Punishment (2003 Badger Poll conducted by the University of Wisconsin – Madison); and...

Be it resolved that this is an opportune moment for the presbyteral council of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee to affirm and support an action plan that will promote the message of “*A Culture of Life and the Penalty of Death*” and thus inhibit recent efforts to restore Capital Punishment in the state of Wisconsin.

Approved by Most Reverend Timothy M. Dolan, Archbishop of Milwaukee, March 16, 2006

The Archdiocesan Presbyteral Council (APC), established in accordance with Canon Law, is a group of priests representative of the presbyterium. The APC serves and assists the bishop in the governance of the diocese according to Canon law and promotes the pastoral good of the portion of the people of God entrusted to him.