



## **Statement from the Colorado Catholic Conference on the repeal of the death penalty in Colorado**

Denver - On March 23, Governor Jared Polis signed into law SB20-100, making Colorado the 22<sup>nd</sup> state to abolish the death penalty. The [Colorado Catholic Conference](#) – which represents Colorado’s four bishops and three dioceses – actively supported this legislation, and today issued the following statement:

“We thank Gov. Jared Polis for signing this historic piece of legislation, and we commend the many state senators and representatives who worked hard to make this important change to our state law.

For many years, the Colorado Catholic Conference has supported efforts to repeal the death penalty, and we are grateful for the determination and commitment it took for the state legislature to pass this bill.

We believe that human life is sacred from conception until natural death. We believe that, because God made us in his image and likeness, it is not possible to lose the dignity that confers to our lives. We are, as Jesus said, his brothers and sisters, even if we have committed great crimes or sins.”

The passage of this legislation also provides an opportunity for education on the Catholic Church’s current teaching on capital punishment:

For many centuries, the death penalty was considered permissible for serious crimes when it was the only way to protect society from violent criminals. But with the advancement of prison systems, the Church under St. Pope John Paul II taught that cases where the death penalty is an absolute necessity “are very rare, if not practically non-existent.” (CCC, 2267). In 1995, St. Pope John Paul II stated:

“The dignity of human life must never be taken away, even in the case of someone who has done great evil. Modern society has the means of protecting itself, without definitively denying criminals the chance to reform.”

More recently, both Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis have advanced the call for the complete abolition of the death penalty. In 2018, Pope Francis stated:

“Today... 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,’ and she works with determination for its abolition worldwide.” (New CCC, 2267).

In 2019, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops voted overwhelmingly to update the Catechism for use by adults in the United States to reflect this position.

Finally, while today we applaud the repeal of the death penalty, we must never forget about the victims of these horrendous crimes, and as a community we must continue to support their families and loved ones. May they find comfort, healing and forgiveness in the love of Jesus Christ.