THE DEATH PENALTY
TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

• The process of capital punishment
• Uncovering the costs and risks associated with our capital punishment system
• Consider the effectiveness and morality of capital punishment from the Church’s perspective
• Learn what you can do to get involved
METHODS OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT
CRIMES PUNISHABLE BY DEATH IN THE U.S.

Murder related to the smuggling of aliens.
Destruction of aircraft, motor vehicles, or related facilities resulting in death.
Murder committed during a drug-related drive-by shooting.
Murder committed at an airport serving international civil aviation.
Retaliatory murder of a member of the immediate family of law enforcement officials.
Civil rights offenses resulting in death.
Murder of a member of Congress, an important executive official, or a Supreme Court Justice.
Espionage.
Death resulting from offenses involving transportation of explosives, destruction of government property, or destruction of property related to foreign or interstate commerce.
Murder committed by the use of a firearm during a crime of violence or a drug-trafficking crime.
Murder committed in a Federal Government facility.
Genocide.
First-degree murder.
Murder of a Federal judge or law enforcement official.
Murder of a foreign official.
Murder by a Federal prisoner.
Murder of a U.S. national in a foreign country.
Murder by an escaped Federal prisoner already sentenced to life imprisonment.
Murder of a State or local law enforcement official or other person aiding in a Federal investigation; murder of a State correctional officer.
Murder during a kidnapping.
Murder during a hostage taking.
Murder of a court officer or juror.
Murder with the intent of preventing testimony by a witness, victim, or informant.
Retaliatory murder of a witness, victim, or informant.
Mailing of injurious articles with intent to kill or resulting in death.
Assassination or kidnapping resulting in the death of the President or Vice President.
Murder for hire.
Murder involved in a racketeering offense.
Willful wrecking of a train resulting in death.
Bank-robbery-related murder or kidnapping.
Murder related to a carjacking.
Murder related to rape or child molestation.
Murder related to sexual exploitation of children.
Murder committed during an offense against maritime navigation.
Murder committed during an offense against a maritime fixed platform.
Terrorist murder of a U.S. national in another country.
Murder by the use of a weapon of mass destruction.
Murder involving torture.
Treason.
Murder related to a continuing criminal enterprise or related murder of a Federal, State, or local law enforcement officer.
Death resulting from aircraft hijacking.
JOURNEY TO AN EXECUTION
Nearly two thirds of Americans believe the death penalty is appropriate for a murder conviction...

...and nearly half of Americans believe the death penalty is not imposed often enough.
THE COST OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

• The U.N. (United Nations) opposes the death penalty; therefore, the United States is in violation of U.N. regulations by simply having a death penalty.

• The California death penalty system costs taxpayers $114 million per year beyond the costs of keeping convicts locked up for life. (L.A. Times, March 6, 2005)

• In Maryland, an average death penalty case resulting in a death sentence costs approximately $3 million. The eventual costs to Maryland taxpayers for cases pursued 1978-1999 will be $186 million. Five executions have resulted. (Urban Institute 2008).

• The most comprehensive study in the country found that the death penalty costs North Carolina $2.16 million per execution over the costs of sentencing murderers to life imprisonment. The majority of those costs occur at the trial level. (Duke University, May 1993).

• Enforcing the death penalty costs Florida $51 million a year above what it would cost to punish all first-degree murderers with life in prison without parole. Based on the 44 executions Florida had carried out since 1976, that amounts to a cost of $24 million for each execution. (Palm Beach Post, January 4, 2000).

• In Texas, a death penalty case costs an average of $2.3 million, about three times the cost of imprisoning someone in a single cell at the highest security level for 40 years. (Dallas Morning News, March 8, 1992).
On January 28th 2011, Hospira Inc., the sole U.S. company that manufactured sodium thiopental, an anesthetic used by states in order to execute prisoners, terminated production of the drug. This has left many states with a shortage, delaying some executions. Significantly, hospitals will now be denied access to a drug with important medical uses.

On February 10, Swiss-based drug company Novartis, which makes a generic version of sodium thiopental, announced it would forbid its distributors from exporting the drug to the U.S.

Many state prison officials have begun looking overseas for sodium thiopental. In January, the FDA announced it would not regulate drugs imported for lethal injection. However, using an unregulated anesthetic in lethal injection may violate the prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment because if the initial anesthetic fails to work properly, then the other drugs will cause extreme pain. On February 2nd, a suit was filed against the FDA seeking to prevent unregulated drugs from being used in executions.

Ohio and Oklahoma have switched to a different anesthetic, pentobarbital. Yet the company that produces the only injectable from of this drug, Lundbeck, has also objected to their drug being used for capital punishment.
THE RISK OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT
“From oppression and violence he redeems their souls; and precious is their blood in his sight”

Psalm 72:14
What Does the Church Say?

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 2267
“We are still a long way from the time when our conscience can be certain of having done everything possible to prevent crime and to control it effectively so that it no longer does harm and, at the same time, to offer to those who commit crimes a way of redeeming themselves and making a positive return to society. If all those in some way involved in the problem tried to develop this line of thought, perhaps humanity as a whole could take a great step forward in creating a more serene and peaceful society.”

Pope John Paul II, July 9, 2000

“It cannot be overemphasized that the right to life must be recognized in all its fullness, ...[we must enact laws and public policies that] take into account the high value that a human being has at every moment of existence. In this context, I joyfully welcome the initiative by which Mexico abolished the death penalty in 2005, and the recent measures adopted by some Mexican states to protect human life from its beginnings.”

Pope Benedict XVI, July 10, 2009
• Get involved with the Social Justice team in your school or parish or contact the Human Rights Office to learn how you can participate in diocesan programs related to death penalty and prison ministry.

• Educate family, friends, and fellow students

• Contact your legislators about sponsoring a ban on capital punishment in your state.

• Discuss with your teachers, parents, pastor, or parish lay ministers the possibility of developing a group-sponsored prison pen pal or visitation program. This is an outreach opportunity that must be coordinated with a parent, teacher, or other adult.

• Volunteer with the local Catholic Charities Turn-Around program that provides clothes and other assistance to newly released inmates to help them find a job and integrate into society.
Summary

- Now understand the process of capital punishment
- See the shortcomings and risks associated with the current national and state-wide capital punishment systems
- Can talk confidently about the effectiveness and morality of capital punishment from the Church’s perspective
- Now aware of what you can do to get involved
Loving God,
We thank you for the gift of life you gave and continue to give to us.
Merciful God,
We ask your pardon and forgiveness for our failure to respect and foster 
all forms of life in our world.
Gracious God,
We pray that with your grace, we will revere, protect, and promote all life 
and that we will be sensitive to the lives of those sentenced to death.
We pray, too, that all who make decisions about life in any form will do so 
with wisdom, love, and courage.
Living God,
We praise and glorify you as Father, Source of all life, 
as Son, Savior of our lives, 
and as Spirit, Sanctifier of our lives.
Amen