



Diocese of Memphis | Diocese of Nashville | Diocese of Knoxville

August 15, 2019

We, the bishops of the three dioceses in Tennessee in conjunction with the Catholic Public Policy Commission, clearly state our strong opposition to the state carrying out the death penalty today. Carrying out this execution does not serve the cause of justice and bucks the trend of states across the country moving away from the use of capital punishment.

Nationally, we have seen many people released from death row after they have been found to have been innocent of the crime for which they were convicted. Based on a human system as it is, there is always the chance that the state executes an innocent person. Even when guilt is certain, the execution is not necessary to protect society.

Pope Francis as well as St. John Paul II have ***called for the end to the death penalty as both cruel and unnecessary.*** It is simply not necessary as the only means to protect society while still providing a just punishment for those who break civil laws. **Rather than serving as a path to justice, the death penalty contributes to the growing disrespect for human life and continues a cycle of violence in society.**

We pray for the victims of crime and their families and friends that they might find peace and healing in God's boundless love. We pray particularly for Wanda and Sheila Romines who Stephen Michael West was convicted of murdering. We pray for Mr. West that he, like all sinners, might find mercy in God's eternal judgment. And, we pray for the people of Tennessee, that through our elected government, we might turn to the path that respects and defends human life from its beginning at conception to its end at a natural death.

Sincerely in Christ,

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Most Reverend Richard F. Stika
Bishop of Knoxville

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Most Reverend J. Mark Spalding
Bishop of Nashville

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Most Reverend David P. Talley
Bishop of Memphis