



Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines
Episcopal Commission on Prison Pastoral Care

470 General Luna St. 1002 Intramuros, Manila

Tel/Fax: 5274059; 5274054 loc 135 E-mail: ecppc@yahoo.com

“I was imprisoned and you visited me” Mt. 25:36

STAND FOR LIFE

We at the Episcopal Commission on Prison Pastoral Care of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP-ECPPC) reiterate our strong opposition to the move to revive the death penalty in the Philippines for the following reasons:

1. The death penalty violates the inherent dignity of a person, which is not lost despite the commission of a crime. No person, no matter how evil he is perceived to be, is beyond reformation. Pope Francis has clearly and unequivocally exhorted countless times that capital punishment is an offense "against the inviolability of life and the dignity of the human person, which contradicts God's plan for man and society" and "does not render justice to the victims, but rather fosters vengeance."¹ Furthermore, in a statement in 2016, the Bishops stated that, "...when God had created man and woman, bringing human life upon the earth ... God rested from the work of creation. In every human person is that incomparably precious breath of life from God himself... It is this Divine gift of life, sublime and unsurpassable, that the death penalty takes away. It is the breath of life, the gift of the Creator, that every judicial execution snatches and cuts short."²

2. There is no direct evidence to prove that the death penalty deters crime, as there are no conclusive studies, local or foreign, that would support this argument that it is indeed a deterrent. On the contrary, a 2009 research study found out that the consensus among criminologists is that the death penalty does not add any significant deterrent effect above that of long term imprisonment. Thus the general assertion that it indeed has a deterrent effect is merely speculative.³ Furthermore, crime statistics do not conclusively show that the death penalty deters the commission of crimes. Based on PNP data in the years after the abolition of the death penalty, crime volume has been actually decreasing⁴.

3. The death sentence is irrevocable; once carried out, there is no possibility for rectifying an erroneous judgment by an imperfect system. With the death penalty justice is nothing but punishment. But true justice is restorative, never merely punitive. It gives the person the chance to change, no matter how slim the chance may be.

4. The death penalty is tilted against the most vulnerable sectors of society, the marginalized and the poor. Experience shows that most, if not all persons meted the death penalty are the poor and uneducated, who cannot afford prominent lawyers to defend them.

5. Being a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) enacted in 1989, as well as to the 2nd Optional Protocol of the ICCPR, the Philippines has committed before the international community not to re-impose the death penalty in the future. Reviving it will go against this commitment and will put our country in a bad light insofar as our standing in the community of nations is concerned.

Instead of the re-imposition of the death penalty, we call on Congress:

1. To focus its full attention to coming up with a comprehensive program to combat the effects of the COVID 19 pandemic and to alleviate the plight especially of the poor who are the ones most adversely affected by this pandemic.

2. To formulate laws and effectively implement existing ones aimed at modernizing and reforming our judicial and correctional systems to make them more restorative and rehabilitative, rather than punitive. This will enable our convicted PDLs to be truly reformed and, after they have served time, be ready to return to the mainstream of society.

3. To stop the reality of graft and corruption in the various institutions that manage our jails and penitentiaries, so that the basic human rights of our PDLs are respected, their legitimate demands properly heard and their needs adequately responded to.

Trusting in the help of our Merciful God, we at the CBCP-ECPPC are ready to dialogue with our legislators to explore with them ways and means to improve our criminal justice system and our ways of treating PDLs (persons deprived of liberty).

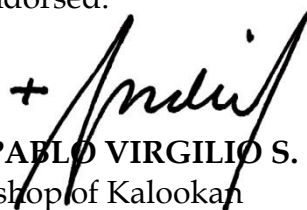
Together let us STAND FOR LIFE AND HEAL AS ONE!

5 August 2020



+JOEL Z. BAYLON, D.D.
Bishop of Legazpi
Chairman

Endorsed:



+PABLO VIRGILIO S. DAVID, D.D.
Bishop of Kalookan
Acting President
Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines

Notes:

¹Letter to the Bishops regarding the new revision of number 2267 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church on the death penalty, from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 02 August 2018.

²CBCP Guidelines on the call to re-impose the death penalty (14 September 2016) and CBCP Pastoral Statement on the Death Penalty (19 March 2017).

³Michael L. Radelet & Tracy L. Lacoek "Do Executions Lower Homicide Rates? The Views of Leading Criminologists, THE JOURNAL OF CRIMINAL LAW and CRIMINOLOGY Vol 99 No. 2 (2009)

⁴PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE (PNP) Annual Report page 9, 2016