

## CCSJ, GCL welcome Pope's decision to revise Church's teaching on Death Penalty

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The Catholic Commission for Social Justice (CCSJ) and The Greater Caribbean for Life (GCL) welcome Pope Francis' decision to revise the Catholic Church's teaching on the Death Penalty.

This decision is clearly linked to the Catholic Church's belief that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of the Church's social doctrine. It is important to note that a number of other faith communities/Christian denominations are also opposed to the death penalty.

A letter to all Catholic Bishops from the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Luis Ladaria, dated 1 August 2018, includes the new text of the n. 2267 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, as approved by Pope Francis. The letter, (see link below), also outlines the development of the doctrine on the death penalty that has taken place in recent times.

<https://zenit.org/articles/pope-francis-decides-to-update-church-catechism-to-assert-church-teaching-against-use-of-death-penalty/>

The revised text, which "centers principally on the clearer awareness of the Church for the respect due to every human life", reads as follows:

**"The death penalty**

**2267.** Recourse to the death penalty on the part of legitimate authority, following a fair trial, was long considered an appropriate response to the gravity of certain crimes and an acceptable, albeit extreme, means of safeguarding the common good.

Today, however, 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’,<sup>[1]</sup> and she works with determination for its abolition worldwide.”

( [1] FRANCIS, Address to Participants in the Meeting organized by the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, 11 October 2017: L’Osservatore Romano, 13 October 2017, 5).

Leela Ramdeen, Chair of CCSJ and GCL says: “To date 141 countries have abolished the death penalty in law or practice. As Ivan Šimonović, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, stated in 2014: *‘As long as the death penalty exists, there will be a need to advocate against it.’* CCSJ and GCL will continue to be tireless advocates, not only for the abolition of the death penalty in the Caribbean region and worldwide, but also for effective systems to be put in place to reduce crime and to support the victims of crime. States have a duty to protect the common good, but we agree with Pope Francis that they can do so without resorting to lethal means. ALL lives matter!”

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