



TENNESSEE
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

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October 2, 2026

Replace the Death Penalty with Life Without Parole

The Tennessee Catholic Conference calls on the State of Tennessee to choose a different path in responding to the most heinous crimes: replace the death penalty with life imprisonment without the possibility of parole. This path serves justice, protects society, and respects the dignity of every human life.

Catholic moral teaching recognizes that even those who commit terrible crimes retain their human dignity. Accountability for grave wrongdoing is necessary, but it does not require the taking of another life. The bishops of Nashville, Memphis, and Knoxville have long maintained that society can be protected, and serious crimes punished without resorting to execution.

The suffering of victims and their families must remain central to our concern. They deserve lasting support, compassion, and justice. An execution cannot restore the life taken, and the uncertainty, prolonged proceedings, and suffering surrounding the death penalty can deepen the anguish of everyone involved, including victims' families, prisoners' families, and those charged with carrying out executions.

The use of medicines through lethal injections to end life also turns instruments of healing against their purpose. Medicine should relieve suffering, heal, and preserve life. Using it to carry out executions contradicts that purpose and raises profound moral concerns.

The failures surrounding Tennessee's executions call for more than another review of procedures. They call for a change in direction. The fundamental moral question is whether the State should continue to take lives when it has another means of protecting the public and imposing a serious, lasting punishment.

Life without parole provides that alternative. It holds those convicted of the gravest crimes accountable and protects society while preserving the possibility of repentance. Tennessee should choose this path of justice and human dignity and bring the death penalty to an end.

END

For questions, contact Rick Musacchio (615)405-7986.