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AUSCP Condemns Capital Punishment as Botched Executions and Public Spectacles Expose the Brutality of State-Sanctioned Killing

[NOTRE DAME, IN] — Following recent harrowing developments in the application of the death penalty across the United States, the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests (AUSCP) issues an urgent call to the national conscience to reject state-sanctioned execution.

"The Catholic Church's teaching on the death penalty is unequivocal: it is inadmissible because it attacks the inviolability and dignity of the person," said AUSCP Executive Director, Rev. Steve Newton, CSC. "These recent cases demonstrate absolutely that capital punishment inherently degrades human dignity, brutalizes our culture, and exposes the inescapable flaws and cruelty of state-sanctioned killing."

Last week, a woman survived a twice-botched execution attempt. In December, the U.S. military is scheduled to livestream the execution of a convicted mass shooter by firing squad. While both individuals were convicted of heinous murders that continue to shock the public conscience, AUSCP asserts that the nation must be equally horrified by the barbaric methods and circumstances used to carry out their sentences.

AUSCP highlights several critical concerns regarding these recent events:

- **The Myth of Clinical Justice:** Capital punishment is the state inflicting severe bodily agony and trauma. It is irrefutable proof that the state cannot reliably engineer a "clinical" extinction of life that honors basic human dignity.
- **State Violence as Public Spectacle:** Broadcasting an execution by firing squad reduces state violence to a public spectacle, feeding a culture of vengeance and further desensitizing society. Publicizing death corrupts the moral conscience of the community.
- **Exceeding Legitimate Defense:** Catholic theology affirms that modern penal systems possess the capacity to safely detain dangerous offenders and protect the common good without lethal force. When offenders are already securely confined, escalating to gruesome and theatrical executions serves no legitimate protective purpose and exceeds the moral limits of legitimate defense.
- **Denying Redemption and Misdirecting Focus:** Justice must leave space for moral accountability, conversion, and redemption. Moreover, sensationalized executions shift public attention away from supporting victims' families and healing traumatized communities.

AUSCP urges lawmakers, military leaders, and citizens of faith and goodwill to recognize the inviolable dignity of all human life and take decisive action to abolish capital punishment in all forms.

About the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests (AUSCP)

The Association of U.S. Catholic Priests is an association of Catholic priests that seeks to promote Vatican II renewal, pastoral dialogue, and justice rooted in the Gospel.

For more information, please visit auscp.org. To join our Gospel Nonviolence Working Group, contact Bob Cushing at bobcushing3@gmail.com.

Media Contact

Rev. Steve Newton, CSC,

Executive Director.

auscpexdir@gmail.com

312-882-4228

auscp.org