The death penalty: a Catholic view

In 1980, the Catholic bishops in the US released a statement in which they opposed the death penalty as a just or moral solution to the problem of crime. They gave the following reasons for their opposition, using a variety of authorities.

- The death penalty forces the person to give up hope. There is no chance for rehabilitation or change of heart.
- There is no evidence that shows the death penalty deters crime. It has had no impact on the rate of murders or other violent crime.
- The use of the death penalty is based on revenge; revenge is not the same as justice and is morally unjustifiable.
- Human life is a sacred gift from God. The death penalty does not increase our appreciation of the value of life, but diminishes it.
- The death penalty always includes the possibility that an innocent person may be executed.

Exercise 11.4: Analysis

Using the worked example in the case study 'To vote or not to vote' as a model, write an analysis of the US bishops' views on capital punishment, paying particular attention to their use of authorities.

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