

TODAY'S ISSUE: EXECUTION

Letters from readers concerning the death penalty and today's execution of Elijah Page.

Respect life

The Presentation Sisters of Aberdeen have long been advocates for respecting life as sacred. With the impending execution of Elijah Page, it is timely that we point out that we, as a congregation, believe the death penalty is immoral and should be abolished. We believe that the death penalty promotes the idea that a life can be condemned and become less than sacred in God's eyes.

It is our belief that all persons are redeemable and loved by God. Though Page has expressed a desire to die, this desire should not supersede the sacredness of the gift of life.

Our belief does not detract from the terrible crimes of the convicted, but it supports life in prison, rather than execution, as a way to uphold the sacred gift of life.

Jesus challenges us to "love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:43-44). Following his example, we support a penal system that promotes reconciliation, not retaliation.

We ask each of you to join us in praying for Page, all death row inmates, victims of violence and their families, and those who seek to establish laws that uphold life as sacred.

Sister Pam Donelan and members of Presentation Sisters Leadership Team,
Presentation Sisters of Aberdeen

What about parents?

I have never lost a child and hope I never do. I understand that it is considered by many to be worst. Elijah Page had a hand in inflicting that loss on the parents of Chester Poage.

I think it is sad that nowhere in the debate on the execution has anyone mentioned the parents of Elijah Page. We are now going to inflict on them the pain of losing a child. Or is it just a given that the tragedy of Chester's needless loss of life is their



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South Dakota death row inmate Elijah Page is escorted by police to an August 2006 hearing in Deadwood.

fault for bringing a murderer into the world?

Don E. Futrell
Sioux Falls

Have mercy

The value of human life has deteriorated with each generation. Each year, more and more people die simply because others do not want them or find them worthy of contributing to society.

In the case of Elijah Page, it is very well-known the Catholic stance on the death penalty; but why do they feel that someone who committed such an awful crime deserves to live? If we were to look into our history, and take a look at some people who are well-known for doing good and are living examples of greatness, some of them have backgrounds that are covered with blood and worse.

For example, the apostle Paul, before he turned to

Christ, was a murderer. He persecuted Christians; he murdered numerous people.

If he would have been living in our time today, what would have happened if we put him to death before he got a chance to turn to Christ?

What would have become of him? Would we even know his name if he did not have that chance to look back on his actions and change?

The Catholic Church opposes the death penalty because we do not know if someone is going to make the decision to repent and to feel remorse for their crime. Everybody should have a chance to recognize their sin and ask for forgiveness. What Elijah Page did, I can't even find words to describe how awful it was, but

someday maybe he would see his actions for what they are and want to become a better person. We should never judge another person's potential for good. Those who knew Paul before he changed might never have thought that was possible at the time, and look at who he became.

Life should be protected in every way, shape and form. If we want to make a stronger community for our children and teach them that killing is wrong, shouldn't we set the example by not committing that very act of taking someone's life?

Mercy is a great virtue, but unfortunately, not enough people hold it as one anymore. I believe that Elijah Page should be shown mercy; even the life of a murderer should hold!

Abby E. McGannon
Sioux Falls

Every life has value

As I think about the horrific things that were done to Chester Allan Poage, I cannot help but imagine how terrified he must have been as he was tortured to death.

As I think about Elijah Page's execution, I am saddened that the people of South Dakota respond to such brutality by continuing the violence and continuing the killing.

Though murder and execution are radically different, at the end of the day someone is killed by someone else. How do we teach our children which people are OK to kill and which people have enough value to live?

My faith informs me that all of us have enough value to live, no exceptions. Despite our actions, God's love for us never ceases, and our sacred worth never diminishes.

Karl R. Kroger
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