



Ab. Fisichella: 'Death penalty against human dignity'



Following Pope Francis' decision to revise the CCC to say the death penalty is inadmissible, Archbishop Rino Fisichella says the move clarifies a content of the faith and safeguards the dignity of the person.

By Devin Watkins

Archbishop Rino Fisichella, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, says Pope Francis' change to the Catechism regarding the death penalty is true progress in continuity with previous Church teaching.

Pope Francis revised the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 2267) on Thursday, declaring that "the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person."

Clarifying content of the faith

Writing in the Vatican's *Osservatore Romano*, Archbishop Fisichella said the change is "a true dogmatic progress with which the content of the faith is clarified". He said this particular point of the faith "has steadily matured to the point of making one understand the unsustainability of the death penalty in our time."

Archbishop Fisichella highlighted three reasons given in the new text of the CCC for the change.

The most important, he said, is the recognition of every person's dignity, which is never lost, even when they commit very serious crimes.

He also notes the "positive" change in the awareness of the Christian people. States, he added, now have more effective systems of detention, "which exclude the danger and trauma of violence being done to innocent people" and allow for the possibility of a guilty person's conversion and redemption.

Report by Devin Watkins

Decisive step

Archbishop Fisichella said the CDF's letter accompanying the announcement notes this change is "in continuity with the previous Magisterium".

"To guard the sacred deposit of faith does not mean to mummify it," he writes, "but to conform it ever more to its own nature and allow the truth of faith to answer the questions of each generation."

Calling the move a development in the "understanding of the Gospel", he said Pope Francis has taken "a decisive step in the interpretation of a long-established doctrine".

Contrary to Christian revelation

Archbishop Fisichella said the Church recognizes the "mixed feelings in the face of such violent and inhumane crimes" that can lead to the decision to pass the death penalty.

"In defending the abolition of the death penalty, one does not forget the suffering of the victims involved, nor the injustice that has been perpetrated. Rather, it is expected that justice take its own decisive step, not taken out of rancour and vengeance, but from a sense of responsibility beyond the present moment."

Voluntarily suppressing a human life," he concluded, "is contrary to Christian revelation."