

**Archdiocese of Los Angeles Respect Life Curriculum  
Office of Life, Justice and Peace**

Teacher Resources Day Three	
<b>Title/Theme</b>	<b>Solutions to Crime and Conflict Capital Punishment, Incarceration, and Restorative Justice</b>
<b>Grade/Subject</b>	6 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Length of Unit/Timeframe</b>	<i>One day with optional follow-up service-learning activities</i>
<b>Overview</b>	Day 3 of a 5 day Respect Life Curriculum for Respect Life Week Sept. 30-Oct. 4, 2013
<b>Day 3: English/Language Arts</b>	Teachers and students are invited to explore the issues surrounding crime and incarceration from a perspective of the dignity of the person. See below and student handout for recommendations.
Essential Questions:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>How do we reconcile the need for justice with that of maintaining the dignity of the human person, particularly when the person in question has committed the evil of murder?</i></li> <li>• <i>What role does restorative justice play in our society today?</i></li> </ul>	
Scriptural and Catechetical Background	
<p><b>Catholic Identity Elements:</b></p> <p><i>National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools</i>  <b>Standard 2</b> An excellent Catholic school adhering to mission provides a rigorous academic program for religious studies and catechesis in the Catholic faith, set within a total academic curriculum that integrates faith, culture, and life. <b>Benchmark 2.7</b> the theory and practice of the Church’s social teachings are essential elements of the curriculum.</p> <p><i>Catechism of the Catholic Church:</i></p> <p><b>2261</b> Scripture specifies the prohibition contained in the fifth commandment: “Do not slay the innocent and the righteous.” <b>The deliberate murder of an innocent person is gravely contrary to the dignity of the human being</b>, to the golden rule, and to the holiness of the Creator. The law forbidding it is universally valid: it obliges each and everyone, always and everywhere.</p> <p><b>2262</b> In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord recalls the commandment, “You shall not kill,” and adds to it the proscription of anger, hatred, and vengeance. Going further, Christ asks his disciples to turn the other cheek, <b>to love their enemies</b>. He did not defend himself and told Peter to leave his sword in its sheath.</p> <p><b>2263</b> The legitimate defense of persons and societies is not an exception to the prohibition against the murder of the innocent that constitutes intentional killing. "The act of self-defense can have a double effect: the preservation of one's own life; and the killing of the aggressor... The one is intended, the other is not."</p> <p><b>2264</b> Love toward oneself remains a fundamental principle of morality. <b>Therefore it is legitimate to</b></p>	

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**insist on respect for one's own right to life.** Someone who defends his life is not guilty of murder even if he is forced to deal his aggressor a lethal blow: *If a man in self-defense uses more than necessary violence, it will be unlawful: whereas if he repels force with moderation, his defense will be lawful. . . . Nor is it necessary for salvation that a man omit the act of moderate self-defense to avoid killing the other man, since one is bound to take more care of one's own life than of another's.*

**2265** Legitimate defense can be not only a right but **a grave duty** for one who is responsible for the lives of others. The defense of the common good requires that an unjust aggressor be rendered unable to cause harm. For this reason, those who legitimately hold authority also have the right to use arms to repel aggressors against the civil community entrusted to their responsibility.

**2266** The efforts of the state to curb the spread of behavior harmful to people's rights and to the basic rules of civil society correspond to the requirement of safeguarding the common good. Legitimate public authority has the right and duty to inflict punishment proportionate to the gravity of the offense. Punishment has the primary aim of redressing the disorder introduced by the offense. When it is willingly accepted by the guilty party, it assumes the value of expiation. Punishment then, in addition to defending public order and protecting people's safety, has a medicinal purpose: as far as possible, it must contribute to the correction of the guilty party.

**2267** Assuming that the guilty party's identity and responsibility have been fully determined, the traditional teaching of the Church does not exclude recourse to the death penalty, if this is the only possible way of effectively defending human lives against the unjust aggressor. If, however, **non-lethal means are sufficient** to defend and protect people's safety from the aggressor, authority will limit itself to such means, as these are more in keeping with the concrete conditions of the common good and more in conformity to the dignity of the human person. Today, in fact, as a consequence of the possibilities which the state has for effectively preventing crime, by rendering one who has committed an offense incapable of doing harm - without definitely taking away from him the possibility of redeeming himself - the cases in which the execution of the offender is an absolute necessity **"are very rare, if not practically nonexistent."**

**Evangelium Vitae (EV), 8.** After the crime, *God intervenes to avenge the one killed.* Before God, who asks him about the fate of Abel, Cain, instead of showing remorse and apologizing, arrogantly eludes the question: "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" (*Gen 4:9*). "*I do not know*": Cain tries to cover up his crime with a lie. This was and still is the case, when all kinds of ideologies try to justify and disguise the most atrocious crimes against human beings. "*Am I my brother's keeper?*": Cain does not wish to think about his brother and refuses to accept the responsibility which every person has towards others. We cannot but think of today's tendency for people to refuse to accept responsibility for their brothers and sisters. Symptoms of this trend include the lack of solidarity towards society's weakest members--such as the elderly, the infirm, immigrants, children--and the indifference frequently found in relations between the world's peoples even when basic values such as survival, freedom and peace are involved.

9. But *God cannot leave the crime unpunished*: from the ground on which it has been spilt, the blood of the one murdered demands that God should render justice (cf. *Gen 37:26; Is 26:21; Ez 24:7-8*). From this text the Church has taken the name of the "sins which cry to God for justice", and, first

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among them, she has included willful murder. For the Jewish people, as for many peoples of antiquity, blood is the source of life. Indeed "the blood is the life" (*Dt 12:23*), and life, especially human life, belongs only to God: for this reason *whoever attacks human life, in some way attacks God himself*.

55. This should not cause surprise: to kill a human being, in whom the image of God is present, is a particularly serious sin. *Only God is the master of life!* Yet from the beginning, faced with the many and often tragic cases which occur in the life of individuals and society, Christian reflection has sought a fuller and deeper understanding of what God's commandment prohibits and prescribes. There are in fact situations in which values proposed by God's Law seem to involve a genuine paradox. This happens for example in the case of *legitimate defence*, in which the right to protect one's own life and the duty not to harm someone else's life are difficult to reconcile in practice. Certainly, the intrinsic value of life and the duty to love oneself no less than others are the basis of *a true right to self-defence*. The demanding commandment of love of neighbour, set forth in the Old Testament and confirmed by Jesus, itself presupposes love of oneself as the basis of comparison: "You shall love your neighbour *as yourself*" (*Mk 12:31*). Consequently, no one can renounce the right to self-defence out of lack of love for life or for self. This can only be done in virtue of a heroic love which deepens and transfigures the love of self into a radical self-offering, according to the spirit of the Gospel Beatitudes (cf. *Mt 5:38-40*). The sublime example of this self-offering is the Lord Jesus himself.

Moreover, "legitimate defence can be not only a right but a grave duty for someone responsible for another's life, the common good of the family or of the State". Unfortunately it happens that the need to render the aggressor incapable of causing harm sometimes involves taking his life. In this case, the fatal outcome is attributable to the aggressor whose action brought it about, even though he may not be morally responsible because of a lack of the use of reason.

56. This is the context in which to place the problem of the *death penalty*. On this matter there is a growing tendency, both in the Church and in civil society, to demand that it be applied in a very limited way or even that it be abolished completely. The problem must be viewed in the context of a system of penal justice ever more in line with human dignity and thus, in the end, with God's plan for man and society. The primary purpose of the punishment which society inflicts is "to redress the disorder caused by the offence". Public authority must redress the violation of personal and social rights by imposing on the offender an adequate punishment for the crime, as a condition for the offender to regain the exercise of his or her freedom. In this way authority also fulfils the purpose of defending public order and ensuring people's safety, while at the same time offering the offender an incentive and help to change his or her behaviour and be rehabilitated.

It is clear that, for these purposes to be achieved, *the nature and extent of the punishment* must be carefully evaluated and decided upon, and ought not go to the extreme of executing the offender except in cases of absolute necessity: in other words, when it would not be possible otherwise to defend society. Today however, as a result of steady improvements in the organization of the penal system, such cases are very rare, if not practically non-existent.

**Vatican II Document: Gaudium et Spes**

16. In the depths of his conscience, man detects a law which he does not impose upon himself, but which holds him to obedience. Always summoning him to love good and avoid evil, the voice of

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conscience when necessary speaks to his heart: do this, shun that. For man has in his heart a law written by God; to obey it is the very dignity of man; according to it he will be judged. Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a man. There he is alone with God, Whose voice echoes in his depths. In a wonderful manner conscience reveals that law which is fulfilled by love of God and neighbor. In fidelity to conscience, Christians are joined with the rest of men in the search for truth, and for the genuine solution to the numerous problems which arise in the life of individuals from social relationships. Hence the more right conscience holds sway, the more persons and groups turn aside from blind choice and strive to be guided by the objective norms of morality.

26. ... there is a growing awareness of the exalted dignity proper to the human person, since he stands above all things, and his rights and duties are universal and inviolable. Therefore, there must be made available to all men everything necessary for leading a life truly human.

28. ... The teaching of Christ even requires that we forgive injuries, and extends the law of love to include every enemy, according to the command of the New Law: "You have heard that it was said: Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thy enemy. But I say to you: love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who persecute and calumniate you" (Matt. 5:43-44).

**United States Conference of Catholic Bishops DEATH PENALTY: FEBRUARY 2011**

Polling indicates waning support for use of the death penalty. In a 2005 Zogby poll, less than half of adult Catholics (48%) supported the use of the death penalty. This was a significant decrease from a previous 68%. Catholics cited "respect for life" as their primary reason for changing attitudes. With increasing data showing numbers of people being exonerated who were wrongly convicted and, with evidence that the application of the death penalty is replete with flaws, other sectors of society are also beginning to question the use of the death penalty.

Data shows the number of executions in the United States in 2010 has dropped by 12% compared with 2009, and by more than 50% since 1999. The number of new death sentences is the lowest in 34 years. More states are beginning to question the use of the death penalty. Even Texas, which has consistently led the nation in number of executions, experienced a 29% drop in executions in 2010. Recently, 61% percent of U.S. voters indicated support for alternative sentences to that of the death penalty.

In 2009, New Mexico received world-wide public attention for abolishing the death penalty. In early January, 2011, the Illinois General Assembly voted to abolish the death penalty and now waits for Governor Pat Quinn's signature to enact the legislation. And, before leaving office in early January, 2011, former Pennsylvania Governor Edward Rendell, called on the Pennsylvania legislature to study the application of the death penalty to determine whether it should continue to be supported. There are a various other proposals pending in state legislatures to reduce or end the use of the death penalty.

**Background/Foundational Information for Teachers**

- **What is the Catechism of the Catholic Church?**

**For more than a decade bishops, theologians, and other experts worked on a "compendium of all Catholic doctrine regarding both faith and morals." The fruit of their work was the catechism,**

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**an organized presentation of the essential teachings of the Catholic Church in regards to both faith and morals, “in the light of the Second Vatican Council and the whole of the church’s tradition.” (<http://www.uscatholic.org/church/2011/05/what-catechism-catholic-church>)**

- **What does the Catechism of the Catholic Church say about the dignity of the human person?**

**#1700** The dignity of the human person is rooted in his/her creation in the image and likeness of God. It is fulfilled in his/her vocation to divine beatitude. It is essential to a human being freely to direct him/herself to this fulfillment. By his/her deliberate actions, the human person does, or does not, conform to the good promised by God and attested by moral conscience. Human beings make their own contribution to their interior growth; they make their whole sentient and spiritual lives into means of this growth.

**#356** Of all visible creatures only man is “able to know and love his creator.” He is “the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake,” and he alone is called to share, by knowledge and love, in God’s own life. It was for this end that he was created, and this is the fundamental reason for his dignity:

**#357** Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons. And he is called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his stead.

**#362** The human person, created in the image of God, is a being at once corporeal and spiritual. The biblical account expresses this reality in symbolic LANGUAGE when it affirms, “then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. Man, whole and entire, is therefore willed by God.”

**#1738** Freedom is exercised in relationships between human beings. Every human person, created in the image of God, has the natural right to be recognized as a free and responsible being. All owe to each other this duty of respect. The right to the exercise of freedom, especially in moral and religious matters, is an inalienable requirement of the dignity of the human person. This right must be recognized and protected by civil authority within the limits of the common good and public order.

**What does the Church say about Human Dignity?** (<https://educationforjustice.org>) Human dignity originates from God and is of God because we are made in God’s own image and likeness (Genesis 1:26-27). Human life is sacred because the human person is the most central and clearest reflection of God among us. Human beings have transcendent worth and value that comes from God; this dignity is not based on any human quality, legal mandate, or individual merit or accomplishment. Human dignity is inalienable – that means it is an essential part of every human being and is an intrinsic quality that can never be separated from other essential aspects of the human person. Human beings are qualitatively different from any other living being in the world because they are capable of knowing

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and loving God, unlike any other creature. Belief in the dignity of the human person is the foundation of morality. The principle of human dignity is the foundation of all the Catholic social teaching principles

**Essential Vocabulary**

Human, Life, Dignity, Church Teaching, Catechism of the Catholic Church, Capital Punishment Restorative Justice

**Instructional Activities**

- Catholic Identity
- English/Language Arts

**For English Class (one hour):**

1. **BEFORE THE VIDEO:** Talk about what Restorative Justice is and connect it to the Church's teaching on human dignity and on capital punishment
2. Watch this video (choose one):
  - a. Compassion and Kinship: Fr. Gregory Boyle at TEDx Conejo
  - b. When Polarity in Forgiveness Happens: Wilma Derksen at TEDx Manitoba
3. Do a quickwrite/reflective response to what they just saw and heard (3 minutes)
4. With a small group or a partner, come up with three main ideas and connect them to Church teaching—use examples from scripture, the Catechism, and other Church documents (refer to above quotes as sources)
5. Once they've made that connection, use their findings to do one of the following:
  - a. Write a creative response (poem, story, &c)
  - b. Apply to a literary character they've studied
  - c. Write a dialogue about how they would confront someone who murdered a family member or who caused violence in your family/neighborhood/school. How would you speak to them? What would it take for you to express forgiveness?
  - d. Share with the class

**Homework Activities/Projects (optional—choose one):**

1. Research an organization that promotes restorative justice (religious or secular) and write a summary of their mission. Evaluate their effectiveness and apply what they do to the Church's teachings. Be ready to share with the class.
2. Create a website or a blog in which you promote your own ideas about restorative justice—consider the group you'd like to address (victims' families, offenders' children, ex-cons trying to get a job, &c)
3. **Debate:** take one of the following fictional characters and put them the penalty phase of a trial. You must determine whether there is a humane means of punishing them and if so, how this can be accomplished:
  - *Lord Voldemort or Bellatrix Lestrange (Harry Potter)*
  - *Macbeth (Macbeth)*
  - *Iago (Othello)*
  - *Raskolnikov (Crime and Punishment)*
  - *Mersault (The Stranger)*
  - *Khan (Star Trek)*

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- *Professor Moriarty (Sherlock Holmes)*
- *Joffrey Baratheon (Game of Thrones)*
- *the Creature (Frankenstein)*

As you debate, consider these issues:

- Preserving human dignity
- Bloodless punishment vs. “giving them a pass”
- The moral character of society and of the individual—would their execution reduce society’s moral character? Would desiring their execution impact the individual’s moral character? Would executing them make us better people?

*This can be done as an in-class debate, an essay, an exercise in dialectics, a PowerPoint or Prezi, a role-playing exercise, a film project or a skit.*

**Other Instructional Resources**

Language Arts:

**Scripture**

Genesis 1:26-27

Then God said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground. "God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them.

Psalm 139:14-15

I praise you, so wonderfully you made me; wonderful are your works! My very self you knew; my bones were not hidden from you, When I was being made in secret, fashioned as in the depths of the earth.

Jeremiah 1:5

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you...

Isaiah 49:15-16

Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you. See, upon the palms of my hands I have written your name; your walls are ever before me.

**Quick Write Overview for teachers**

[http://nrhs.nred.org/www/nred\\_nrhs/site/hosting/Literacy%20Website/Literacy%20Strategy%20Templates/Quick\\_Write\\_description.pdf](http://nrhs.nred.org/www/nred_nrhs/site/hosting/Literacy%20Website/Literacy%20Strategy%20Templates/Quick_Write_description.pdf)

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**Links**

**Catholic sources**

On-line version of the Catechism of the Catholic Church <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catechism/catechism-of-the-catholic-church/epub/index.cfm>

**Benedict XVI No *one owns their own life. Everyone is called to safeguard and respect life from the time of conception to natural death.***

<http://www.romereports.com/palio/benedict-xvi-respect-life-from-conception-to-natural-death-english-1590.html#.Ua53hGQINpw>

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops ***As a gift from God, every human life is sacred from conception to natural death.*** <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/>

<https://educationforjustice.org/free-files/HumanDignity09.pdf>

**Action/Education (both Catholic and secular)**

Prolife Curriculum Pre-k to 12<sup>th</sup> Knights for Life <http://www.cpforslife.org/curriculum.htm>

Materials to start a Pro-life Club at school <http://generationsforlife.org/clubs/curriculum/>

Principals and Choices Professional Curriculum (awesome for high school)  
<http://www.principlesandchoices.com/learn-more-about-principles-choices1/>

Homeboy Industries <http://homeboyindustries.org>  
Pay special attention to the How You Can Help tab

Catholic Campaign to End the Use of the Death Penalty <http://old.usccb.org/deathpenalty/>

Catholic Mobilizing Network <http://catholicsmobilizing.org>

I Am Whole Life <http://www.iamwholelife.com/the-issues/death-penalty/>

**Kids/Youth**

AlternativesYouth.org [http://www.alternativesyouth.org/restorative\\_justice](http://www.alternativesyouth.org/restorative_justice)

[Kids.net.au](http://kids.net.au) – a site for kids on capital punishment

[Kids Against the Death Penalty](http://kidsagainstthedeathpenalty.org) – their website

**YouTube videos for lesson**

**\*\* TEDx Talks**

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1. Wilma Derksen

[http://youtu.be/U7Byq9sW\\_XU](http://youtu.be/U7Byq9sW_XU)

16 mins, 14 sec.

2. Fr. Greg Boyle

<http://youtu.be/ipR0kWt1Fkc>

20 mins, 40 sec.