

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

- ✓ We affirm that all persons have inherent dignity including victims, offenders and their families.
- ✓ We support policies and programs that address the needs of victims.
- ✓ We support programming to improve prospects for offenders returning to their families and communities.
- ✓ We advocate for policies that help reduce violence to create safer communities.
- ✓ We support chaplains who care for the spiritual needs of those incarcerated in our prisons and jails.
- ✓ We advocate for life in prison rather than the use of the death penalty.

HOPE AND HEALING FOR THOSE AFFECTED BY CRIME

“Victims and their families must have a more central place in a reformed criminal justice system.”

**U.S. Bishops
Responsibility,
Rehabilitation, and
Restoration**

“God is in everyone’s life. Even if the life of a person has been a disaster, even if it’s destroyed by vices, drugs or anything else—God is in this persons’ life.”

Pope Francis

All of us are called to stand with victims in their search for healing and genuine justice. Our pastoral presence to victims must be compassionate and constant. Victims and their families need to know that they are not alone and that the Church and greater community are there to walk with them through their pain and suffering. We need to expand our outreach to victims. Victims of crime have a right to be kept informed and involved throughout the criminal justice process.

Protecting communities and preventing crime requires helping offenders return successfully back into society. Upon re-entering society, former offenders, as well as their families and community, face complex challenges. Many are likely to struggle with substance abuse, lack of adequate education and job skills, limited housing options and mental health issues.

We do not support policies that treat young offenders as though they are adults. Children should not live their lives behind bars for decisions they made at a stage of mental and emotional immaturity. Healing and rehabilitation are the primary focus and intent of restorative justice which seeks to amend the justice system to reflect the idea that kids can change.

We encourage models of restorative justice: educating parishioners and community members on crime prevention and effective responses to victims and offenders and restoring a sense of community that resists the violence that has engulfed so much of our culture. And we emphasize that the death penalty offers the tragic illusion that we can defend life by taking life. St. John Paul II condemned the death penalty (cf. *Evangelium Vitae*, 56), as does the Catechism of the Catholic Church (No. 2267).

We continue to press for expanded access to prisoners through our chaplaincy programs, including access by dedicated volunteers who will help nourish their faith life. We oppose limitations on the authentic religious expression of prisoners and roadblocks that inhibit prison ministry.

For more information, visit www.cacatholic.org or contact Linda Wanner, lwanner@cacatholic.org, 916-313-4017