

# Passage on the Death Penalty Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus* (2011)

## Benedict XVI

83. Rising crime rates in increasingly urban societies are a cause of great concern for all leaders and governments. Independent judiciary and prison systems are urgently needed, therefore, for the restoration of justice and the rehabilitation of offenders. It is time to put a stop to "miscarriages of justice and ill-treatment of prisoners", and "the widespread non-enforcement of the law ... which represents a violation of human rights,"<sup>133</sup> as well as imprisonment either without trial or else with much-delayed trial. "The Church in Africa ... recognizes her prophetic mission towards all those affected by crime and their need for reconciliation, justice and peace."<sup>134</sup> Prisoners are human persons who, despite their crime, deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. They need our care. With this in mind, the Church must provide for pastoral care in prisons, for the material and spiritual welfare of the prisoners. This pastoral activity is a real service that the Church offers to society, and it is one that the state should support for the sake of the common good. Together with the Synod members, I draw the attention of society's leaders to the need to make every effort to eliminate the death penalty<sup>135</sup> and to reform the penal system in a way that ensures respect for the prisoners' human dignity. Pastoral workers have the task of studying and recommending *restorative justice* as a means and a process for promoting reconciliation, justice and peace, and the return of victims and offenders to the community.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Cf. Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, *Propositio 54*.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

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