

Day 8: October 20

Intercession: May our nation end its use of the death penalty, bearing witness to the dignity of every human life.

Prayers: *Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be*

Reflection: As Catholics, we believe and put our hope in a merciful and loving God, conscious of our own brokenness and need for redemption. Our Lord calls us to imitate Him by witnessing to the inherent dignity of every person, including those whose actions have been despicable. Our hope lies in the mercy of God who says to us, “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy” (Mt 5:7) and “I desire mercy, not sacrifice” (Mt 9:13).

In the story of Cain and Abel, God refuses to take Cain’s life as punishment for killing his brother. But God’s justice requires that Cain live the rest of his earthly life as a wanderer. Through this account, we are reminded that “not even a murderer loses his personal dignity, and God Himself pledges to guarantee this. And it is precisely here that the paradoxical mystery of the merciful justice of God is shown forth” (*Evangelium vitae* 9).

As the culture of death threatens to select who does and who does not deserve life, we must uphold that *all* human life has invaluable dignity and worth. As Christians, we are called to witness to the Gospel of life, hope, and mercy.

Acts of Reparation (*Choose one.*)

- Embrace silence today. Refrain from listening to music or podcasts during mundane moments of your day like commuting, cooking, or cleaning. Instead, turn your attention to God’s voice without noise or distractions.
- Pray the Angelus today (usccb.org/angelus)—on awakening, at noon, or at 6 p.m. (or all three times).
- Offer some other sacrifice, prayer, or act of penance that you feel called to do for today’s intention.

One Step Further: For people committed to upholding the sanctity of human life, the need to respect and protect innocent human life is apparent. For some, however, issues like the death penalty may seem less clear. Find answers to common questions about the death penalty from a Catholic perspective in, “Death Penalty: Catholic Q&A” (usccb.org/death-penalty-q-and-a).

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