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Death Penalty – A Bad Idea
by Archbishop Michael J. Sheehan
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Governor Susana Martinez has expressed her desire that the death penalty be reintroduced in the State of New Mexico for certain crimes. I believe that repealing the repeal of the death penalty would be a step backwards for our State.

We are deeply saddened by the heinous acts of violence experienced by so many people in our society because of criminal activity. Our hearts go out to them. We pray God's healing hand to come upon them. But the execution of a dangerous criminal will not bring back a loved one who was killed. I believe it is much better that there be life imprisonment without parole so that the citizens of our State can be protected from such a criminal.

There are many reasons why I think the death penalty is wrong. First, it is cruel and unnecessary. Why do we kill people who kill people to show that killing people is wrong!

Most Countries in Europe haven't had the death penalty since World War II. By allowing the death penalty in our Country we are in the company of Countries such as China, North Korea and Iran. The number of States repealing the death penalty in our Country has increased significantly in the last few years.

Secondly, criminology experts tell us that the death penalty does not deter people from committing murder.

Thirdly, there is the innocence issue. There are a number of people who have been put to death who were later proven to be innocent. This has become an increasingly important factor in the shift of public opinion away from supporting the death penalty. DNA evidence has proved that some of those condemned to death were innocent.

Fourth, capital punishment has been shown to actually cost more than life imprisonment. This is because of the lengthy legal appeals and the need for attorneys to represent the convict. It is less expensive to have life imprisonment as a punishment.

Fifth, the teaching of the Catholic Church opposes capital punishment. Pope John Paul II has emphasized this in his Encyclical *Evangelii Vitae*.

I believe that a climate of respect for life that includes opposition to capital punishment is very important. I hope that our legislators will remain firm that the repeal of the death penalty signed into law two years ago in our State will remain in place.