



THE THOMAS MERTON CENTER

*for Catholic Spiritual Development*

January 20, 2017

Governor Jerry Brown  
c/o State Capitol, Suite 1173  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Brown:

On behalf of the membership of the Thomas Merton Center of Palo Alto, a non-profit lay Catholic religious education organization, we implore you to commute the death sentences of those individuals currently on California's death row. Please remand those prisoners to life imprisonment, an action which is within your constitutional authority to implement.

We were intensely disappointed by the failure of Proposition 62 in November and discouraged by the passage of Proposition 66. We believe that there is no moral leg on which the state can stand in implementing the death penalty under any circumstances.

We stand in unity with Pope Francis I, who, has spoken out frequently and clearly against the imposition of the death penalty:

“Nowadays the death penalty is inadmissible, no matter how serious the crime committed. It is an offence against the inviolability of life and the dignity of the human person, which contradicts God's plan for man and society, and his merciful justice, and impedes the penalty from fulfilling any just objective. It does not render justice to the victims, but rather fosters vengeance”... With the application of the death penalty, the convict is denied ... an encounter with God's merciful and healing justice.” (March 20, 2015)

We support the opinion of the editors of the *Los Angeles Times*, who said eloquently shortly before November 8:

“The chief reason to abolish the death penalty in California is that it is cruel and unusual punishment, both immoral and inhumane and out of step with ‘evolving standards of decency’ in the United States. It has little deterrent effect, by most accounts, and is administered so capriciously that it makes a mockery of the concept of equal justice. Poor people and people of color are disproportionately put to death for crimes that bring other defendants merely a long prison sentence. Indeed, whether a murderer is ultimately executed often depends less on the gravity of his offense than on whether he committed it in a particular county or a particular state or was represented by a decent lawyer. The process is open to manipulation and mistakes, yet once the appeals process is complete, miscarriages of justice can never be corrected...”

You have the unique opportunity to save the lives of those on California's death row.. Please do not hesitate to take advantage of it.

Should you have questions or wish to discuss our entreaty, we would be honored to bring a small delegation of Merton Center members to meet with you in Sacramento. Respond to Diana Diamond, chair of the Merton Center SpeakOut Committee at [dianaldiamond@gmail.com](mailto:dianaldiamond@gmail.com), (650) 323-4787.

Most sincerely,

**The Board of the Thomas Merton Center:**

Victoria Sullivan  
Rosana Madrigal de Beattie  
Michael McMahan  
Mary O'Connor  
Gerard McGuire  
Helen Bunje  
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