

NAME: _____ BLOCK: _____

ANNOTATION WORKSHEET

In-Class Exercise: The purpose of this worksheet is to learn how to apply what you've read about "how to annotate" and "how to mark a book." Be sure to follow the directions! Using **PDF Annotator** use the article below to complete the worksheet questions and follow the annotation directions. You will be writing and typing directly on this worksheet. **To turn it in:** You will be submitting this to me at the end of class today by using the dropbox. You will need to work diligently.

STEP ONE: Locate the article below on "Capital Punishment" by William Saunders. This is the article which you will be making annotations.

STEP TWO: Find the first instance of each of the following vocabulary words and using the highlighter tool, highlight each word. Example: For "retribution" highlight the first time the word is used in the article. Hint: You can use the "search" function. If you can't find it, use Ctrl-F.

sanctity
vengeance

malefactor
heinous

justice

retribution

STEP THREE: Using Dictionary.com, type out a definition for the following words. You will use the "dogbone" icon to do this:

justice

retribution

vengeance

sanctity

STEP FOUR: Using Dictionary.com, write out a definition for the following words. You will use the “pen” icon to do this and write with your tablet pen:

malefactor

heinous

STEP FIVE: Using the pen tool and your tablet pen, underline the first sentence of the third, fourth, and fifth paragraphs, and “punishment ought to deter future crime” in the sixth paragraph. These are each topic sentences for their paragraphs. So, with your tablet pen, write “topic sentences” in the margin near these paragraphs.

STEP SIX: Write two doo-dads (*) in the margin beside the paragraph that begins “Just punishment strives...” and then underline twice the words: “retribution, deterrence and reform.”

STEP SEVEN: Now, using the highlighter tool, use the color orange to highlight “capital punishment may be used only for heinous crimes.” Then write the words: “heinous crimes” in the margin near that paragraph.

STEP EIGHT: Write the words “Old Testament” in the margin beside the paragraph that begins with “Following this perspective of punishment.” Now, underline the quotation from Genesis (Gn 9:6) and Exodus (Ex 21:12, 14).

STEP NINE: Using your tablet pen, underline the first sentence of each remaining paragraph. These are also topic sentences.

Capital Punishment

By William Saunders

The issue of capital punishment is indeed a highly debated issue in our country. For Catholics, the issue is more problematic because of the Church’s teaching regarding the sanctity of human life and the dignity of the person, which seems to oppose the use of capital punishment.

The Catechism does state, “Preserving the common good of society requires rendering the aggressor unable to inflict harm. For this reason, the traditional teaching of the Church has acknowledged as well-founded the right and duty of legitimate public authority to punish

malefactors by means of penalties commensurate with the gravity of the crime not excluding, in cases of extreme gravity, the death penalty” (No.2266). To understand the Church’s position in this matter, we have to be clear about the foundational principles governing the teaching.

First, the state has the duty to preserve the common good and to protect its citizens from harm. Therefore, the state may declare and wage a just war against an aggressor outside of the community as well as recognize the individual’s legal right of self-defense.

A state may also impose just penalties on those individuals who commit crimes and threaten the well-being of society.

Second, justice demands that punishment fit the crime; the penalty must be proportionate to the injury. In this way, punishment provides for proper retribution, deterrence and reform. As a form of retribution, punishment restores the order of justice which the criminal violated. For example, if a criminal steals something, restitution must be made, such as the return of the stolen property. The criminal may also be deprived of certain freedoms through, for instance, incarceration or fines. Just retribution attempts to heal the injury caused by the crime.

Just retribution, however, is not vengeance. After the guilty verdict for Timothy McVeigh, a local Denver radio station set-up a stand near the federal courthouse and enticed drivers to honk if they wanted to “fry” him. True justice mandates that we eliminate vengeance.

Along this line of thought, punishment ought to deter future crime. If justice is rendered fairly and swiftly, specific punishment for specific crimes ought to prevent further crime by either the criminal himself or others. Punishment should not only protect society from a particular criminal but also deter individuals from committing the same crime in the future.

In the end, the punishment of a criminal should incite his reform. The criminal being punished is hopefully moved to see the error of his ways, to repent and to change his life.

Just punishment strives to balance all three perspectives; retribution, deterrence and reform. Note also that in applying such punishment the state must ensure to the best of its ability that the person receives a fair trial and that only a legitimate authority impose any sentence.

Following this perspective of punishment, capital punishment may be used only for heinous crimes, crimes which shake the foundations of society and which would necessitate such a severe proportionate punishment. For example, the Old Testament laws permitted the use of capital punishment for serious sins: “If anyone sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has man been made” (Gn 9:6) and “Whoever strikes a man a mortal blow must be put to death. When a man kills

another after maliciously scheming to do so, you must take him even from my altar and put him to death” (Ex 21:12, 14). However, capital crimes in the Old Testament included not just premeditated murder, but also kidnapping, cursing or striking of parents, sorcery, sodomy, bestiality and idolatry. These sins were so heinous in the eyes of God and so threatening to the spiritual and physical welfare of the community that justice mandated capital punishment as proper retribution.

The capital sentence could inspire reform. The condemned criminal facing the loss of his life and knowing he will appear before God in judgment, would hopefully repent.

The capital sentence could also deter future crime. Removed from society permanently and sent to God for divine justice, the criminal would never inflict injury again. St. Thomas Aquinas affirmed that if the good citizens “are protected and saved by the slaying of the wicked, then the latter may be lawfully put to death.” Moreover, the execution of a criminal should also deter others from committing like crimes and inspire their reform.

Please keep in mind that the Old Testament does speak of God’s divine mercy: “As I live says the Lord God, I swear I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked man, but rather in the wicked man’s conversion, that he may live” (Ez 33:11). “That he may live” may not so much focus on physical life as it does on the spiritual life, whereby the repentant sinner would avoid eternal punishment in hell.

Finally, capital punishment may be used to punish “malefactors,” i.e. people who freely choose to commit a heinous crime. St. Thomas Aquinas asserted that through sin, a man departs from the order of reason and falls away from the dignity of being an individual made in God’s image and likeness. A man who commits a heinous crime, he argued, is even worse than a brute beast and even more harmful. Such a man may be permanently extricated: Just as an infectious or diseased organ would be removed to preserve the health of the entire body, so a person who is dangerous or infectious to the community may be executed rather than corrupt or bring harm to the community.

Such a malefactor must be distinguished from an innocent person. Human life is indeed sacred in all

forms and all times, and we as innocent human beings have a sacred right to life. However, the Church carefully underscores the inviolability of this right for “innocent life.” In the “Declaration on Euthanasia” (1980) the Church asserted, “Nothing and no one can in any way permit the killing of an innocent human being, whether a fetus or an embryo, an infant or an adult, an old person or one suffering from an incurable disease, or a person who is dying,” and in the “Declaration on Procured Abortion” (1974) the Church asserted “Divine law and natural reason, therefore, exclude all right to

the direct killing of an innocent man.” Pope John Paul II in his recent encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* confirmed...the direct and voluntary killing of an innocent human being, always gravely immoral” (No. 57). When a person freely commits such a heinous crime and is judged as a threat to society as a whole, that person relinquishes the right to life in this society, this time and this space.

Given this reasoning, the Catholic Church has in principle upheld the right of the state to execute certain criminals.

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