



Most Reverend Raymond J. Boland
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Statement
of the
Most Reverend Raymond J. Boland, DD
concerning
The Scheduled Execution of Stanley Dewaine Lingar

(Kansas City, Missouri ~ February 1, 2001) -- If the scheduled execution of Stanley Dewaine Lingar takes place on schedule at one minute past midnight Wednesday morning, Missouri will have executed its 15th condemned man since the late Governor Mel Carnahan commuted the sentence of Darrell Mease at the request of Pope John Paul II on January 28, 1999.

At 10:00 a.m., on Monday, Rita Linhardt of the Missouri Catholic Conference, the Missouri Catholic Bishops' public policy agency, will join the deputy executive director of Amnesty International USA, Gerald LeMelle, and Kent E. Gipson of Kansas City, attorney for Stanley Lingar, in hand-delivering a letter to our newly-elected Governor Bob Holden, urging him to commute Mr. Lingar's death sentence to life imprisonment.

As bishop of some 163,000 Catholics in western Missouri, and in the name of many more thousands who feel as we do on this issue, I wish to express our support for that petition, and to urge Governor Holden to begin his tenure with such an act of reasoned mercy.

The pope has pointed out that the death penalty is no longer necessary for the protection of citizens in our organized societies. That is a proposition with which many people of whatever religious persuasion can agree. And, in fact, the leaders of many religious and civic groups in Missouri have been expressing their opposition to the death penalty for some time.

We believe in the sacredness and God-given dignity of every human life "which must never be taken away," as the pope said during his visit to St. Louis two years ago, "even in the case of someone who has done great evil."

Respect for life would be a sufficient reason in itself for us to reconsider the death penalty in Missouri. But there are other reasons as well. Responsible people have pointed out flaws in our system of assigning and administering the death penalty similar to those which impelled Governor George H. Ryan of Illinois to declare a moratorium in his state. It appears there may be serious problems with the process that led to the death sentence for Stanley Lingar as well. While people of good will may differ on whether or not the death penalty should ever be applied in our society, all of us, as U.S. citizens are committed to fairness, justice and due process. Even those who support capital punishment would agree that when we apply that penalty from which there is no return, we should be absolutely certain that all of the standards of fairness, justice and due process have been thoroughly upheld.

Even if one person has been wrongly executed, that single mistake would be reason enough for us to re-examine the entire issue.

I therefore urge Governor Holden, in the name of justice and mercy, to commute the sentence

of Stanley Lingar. I further urge that our people, our legislators and our governor support a moratorium on the death penalty while a commission studies whether or not we should continue to use that measure and, if so, what safeguards need to be put in place to insure justice and fairness.