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## Advocate Father Shawn Steepy - Call to Action...



Fr. Shawn Steepy

“As anyone who has survived the recent election is well aware, there is a lack of unity in our nation right now. There is little indication of commonality, community, or compassion. And yet the Kansas Coalition Against the Death Penalty brings together disparate political positions and cultural perspectives. We are all unified for one common purpose: an end to executions here in the state of Kansas.

Why makes the Coalition so unique? It brings people together. Republicans and Democrats, Conservatives and Liberals, may not agree on most things,

but we agree that the Death Penalty is wrong.

“It’s a big tent.” What is the tent made of? My suggestion is that the “tent” which covers all of us is the belief in the innate dignity of human life. Every life has inherent value and nothing can extinguish that.

And the good news about our big tent is that there is room for more people and more perspectives. Those who seem so adamantly opposed to repeal have more in common with us than either they or we may realize. They support the death penalty from the perspective of their loss, which is understandable. Their loss stems from their belief in the innate dignity of human life. We share their belief.

There is room for all in our big tent.

Years ago I attended the Career Prosecutor’s Course at the University of Houston where one of our speakers had argued *Gregg v Georgia* to the U.S. Supreme Court. *Gregg*, which was decided in 1976, reversed the 1972 decision of *Furman v Georgia*, which had held that the death penalty was unconstitutional. The attorney who had successfully argued for the constitutionality of the death penalty stated he had told the Supreme Court that on capital cases they “needed to get down into the mud with him.” We don’t need get down into the mud with the killers, the murderers, with those who lack our shared respect for human life. We need to do better than that. Murderers do

not set the standards for the rest of us. Our standard is our belief in the value of every human life

Our social and moral compact are grounded in the standard above. We are looking for the day when Kansas stands with the eighteen states which have abolished the death penalty. We can make a difference in the national campaign to end the death penalty. We are realists; we are also optimists. Victor Hugo spoke to us when he wrote, “there is nothing like a dream to create the future.” Our dream is an end to executions in Kansas, and we are creating that future.

Our work is not finished, but we get closer every day, and our goal is inevitable.” ~ Fr. Shawn Steepy