

# VIEWPOINT

## The Quality of Mercy

Writer Richard Campbell of this week's **Viewpoint** publishes a weekly paper in Jensen Beach, Florida. **The Mirror**, in that it is a local weekly, resembles **The Village Advertiser**. On December 12, 1984, Campbell's paper carried his views on the death penalty.

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The Christmas season seems an unlikely time for the death penalty in Florida to become a topic of conversation and debate. The season celebrates the beginning, not the end of life.

But church leaders of all denominations have begun the debate with a letter to all parishioners. An overwhelming majority of people in Florida believe in the death penalty as a deterrent to murder and as a punishment befitting the taking of human life.

The clerics are trying to change that thinking, and to bring pressure upon legislators to end the death penalty in Florida.

They are trying to create a climate in Florida, according to one leader, "in which legislators won't consider it political suicide to be against the death penalty."

In a "Letter to Christians," a letter to the parishioners of many denominations, church leaders called the death penalty "immoral," and presented Biblical arguments, chapter and verse, that proved their point.

As in all such cases, as many arguments for as against the death penalty appear in the Bible. It depends upon whether the person is reading, and interpreting, the parts of the New and the Old Testaments that support his or her viewpoint.

There is only one minister I know who has had a child murdered. His son was murdered in Ft. Pierce. He is the minister of the Community Church in Vero Beach. Ask him about the death penalty.

Ask me. My child, Frannie, a few days before her 18th birthday, was robbed, kidnapped, tortured as her abductors discussed her murder in their automobile, dragged out of the car on State Road 76, stabbed with a knife, and murdered by four animals.

They did not think, as the letter to Christians suggests, one thought about the "public thought that the cycle of violence can be broken." They murdered my child... for \$35.

Having had years and years of no capital punishment, and having had only a few of the murderers put to death, it is hard to imagine the deterrent factor of putting the animals who kill to death.

It is not retribution that is sought by the victims of these murderers, as the letter suggests. It is the knowledge that the death of that person might make someone think twice before committing cold blooded murder.

There are certain elements in the human race who do not believe in the rules of society. They believe in a rule of their own, and should be judged by that rule.

The wanton killing of one, the serial murderers, all must be judged according to the rules of society, and if found guilty, be removed from society.

One of the murderers of my Frannie had been released from prison early, for he was a "model prisoner," and deserved early release. His crime? He had brutally raped a woman.

Where is that woman today? In a mental institution, divorced, having lost her family and her mind.

She was still serving her sentence while the animal who brutally raped her was walking the streets free. That same animal murdered my daughter.

Yes, bishops and archbishops and leaders of all faiths, talk to me about the abolition of the death penalty for animals who set their own rules of life, who believe that murder is just a way to get what they want, at whatever cost in human life and human suffering.

Talk to the broken families of the victims of these animals.

Talk of the dreams that awaken the parents, crying and sobbing, as they try to control the subconscious memories of a child that has been viciously murdered.

Believe in the value of human life as you worship. Then, talk to me.

### *Village Advertiser Commentary*

No one can deny that the death penalty is severe punishment and no one could argue that killing the murderer would return life to his victim, and no one would say the pain suffered by a victim's loved ones is assuaged when a killer is put to death. On the other hand, a murderer who pays the death penalty can never kill again. And society rids itself of burdens of supporting killers unfit to mingle with others of their species. And, while parents of a murdered child must waken weeping again and again, knowing their child's murderer lives no more brings some small relief... if not from sorrow, from fear.