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Christian Principles (Regarding Capital Punishment) (Fr. John Parker)

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Shawn Paul Humphries was a murderer executed by the state of South Carolina on December 2, 2005. Fr. John Parker wrote the following piece for *The Post and Courier in Charleston, SC* on December 14, 2005.

Hopefully, the Dec. 3 article about the execution of Shawn Humphries appeared on Page 7B of *The Post and Courier* (as opposed to a more prominent place) because we are ashamed to publish it as news. But, to quote an ancient saint, «Fie on the outrage!»

How many times a year do we read about citizens incensed that the Ten Commandments are not posted here or there or are removed from public view, and yet we consent, at least by our silence, to state-sanctioned murder? We do a fine job of «cleaning the outside of the vessel,» as did the Pharisees, but we are morally bankrupt inside. On what Christian grounds do we defend capital punishment? And in South Carolina!



«An eye for an eye» is no Christian principle. Jesus himself made this clear: «You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if any one would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well.» (Matthew 5:38-44)

Jesus also said something about murder: «You have heard that it was said to the men of old, ‘You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.’ But I

say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be liable to the hell of fire.» (Matthew 5:21)

Who stands uncondemned? Let him inject the first needle.

If we so fervently desire the «monuments» of Christianity – or at least of so-called «Judeo-Christian values» – to be displayed in public, perhaps we ought first to demonstrate that we are truly Christian people, as St. James, the brother of the Jesus, urges in his epistle: «Be doers of the word and not hearers only.» (James 1:22)

Otherwise, we may find ourselves more than doubly damned. Lord, have mercy.

By Fr. John Parker

This article was published as a Letter to the Editor in The Post and Courier in Charleston, SC on December 14, 2005 and is posted here with permission.

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