



Sister of Mercy, Mary Schmuck, serves with the Archdiocese of Louisville Catholic Charities Parish Social Ministry Department.

# Where Do We Stop the Violence?

The sands moving through the hourglass of life are on schedule to stop for one Kentuckian on September 25, 2007.

Further, they are being forcibly stopped in our names.

Governor (and also medical doctor) Ernie Fletcher has signed a death warrant that sets September 25 as the execution date for an east Kentucky man.

Why this date with the next phase of eternal life? Ralph Baze, Jr. was convicted in the 1992 deaths of two county law enforcement officers, Powell County Sheriff Steve Bennett and Deputy Arthur Briscoe, during their attempt to serve him with assault and stolen-property charges arrest warrants.

So, these 2 deaths are being met with yet another premeditated killing. Where is the sense of this?

Where, when, does the violence stop?

What does this say about us as individuals and as a Kentucky community as we reflect on this situation, as we attempt to redress harm done by this violent response?

Are there other ways to:

- protect society from harm by this convicted individual?
- punish this individual for the grave harm done to 2 other individuals who were also persons serving in a law enforcement institution?
- affirm our protection of the right to life as we express our abhorrence for the crime of killing people?
- deter others from similar violent actions?
- make restitution to the families, communities and society hurt by these 2 killings?
- work toward the rehabilitation of the person who

did the original killing?

If our response to any of these questions is yes, then don't we need to contact Gov Fletcher as soon as possible to urge him to change the punishment for Ralph Baze to a prison sentence rather than executing him?

Kentucky Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty is gathering signatures until September 19 on its petition urging Gov Fletcher to punish Ralph Baze by keeping him in prison instead of killing him. Visit here to sign: [www.petitiononline.com/rbaze/925/](http://www.petitiononline.com/rbaze/925/).

Is killing people who killed others our only tool?

It seems to me that one of our bigger pitfalls as a society right now is being co-opted into violence we say we vehemently protest as we respond to and try to deal with the violence of others. Thus we all risk flailing about as blinded persons.

Saying that the law allows the death penalty in certain situations doesn't end the consideration for me. A law that provides for the killing of people who kill people needs to be changed—and laws are the product of human deliberation and choice and so we can (and often do) change them.

Our laws are to be governed by our values. The inalienable dignity of each human person is a major value as is the life of every human person, including that of persons convicted of grievous crime. Laws need to be just, not just vengeful.

Our hearts, out of which come our choices, need to be in tune with God's take on things and especially on each and every person created in God's image.

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