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Maryland death penalty repeal signed into law

by Tom Gallagher

NCR Today

From The Associated Press:

Maryland has become the first state south of the Mason-Dixon line to abolish the death penalty.

Democratic Gov. Martin O'Malley signed the measure at a crowded ceremony on Thursday. Attending was one-time Maryland death row inmate Kirk Bloodsworth. He is the first person in the U.S. freed because of DNA evidence after being convicted in a death penalty case.

Maryland is the 18th state to abolish the death penalty.

Meanwhile, the Maryland Catholic Conference has issued a joyous, breathless press release titled, "Let the Light Shine! Maryland Repeals the Death Penalty." Here's an excerpt:

Today the light of life shines brightly in the state of Maryland. The darkness of state-sponsored executions has ended with the death penalty repeal legislation's signing into law.

"This is a historic moment for Maryland as we become the 18th state to eliminate the death penalty," said Mary Ellen Russell, executive director of the Maryland Catholic Conference. "In honor of this joyful moment and long-sought victory to end the death penalty in our state, the Basilica in Baltimore will be lit at dusk and will shine overnight for Maryland."

The press release specifically mentions "leadership of Maryland Citizens Against State Executions, led by Jane Henderson and so many other partners in our coalition."

Of course, the bishops of the Maryland Catholic Conference from the Baltimore archdiocese, the

Washington archdiocese, and the diocese of Wilmington could not muster up a simple "thank you" to the leadership of O'Malley, a Catholic Democrat, whose leadership on repealing the death penalty made this moment in time possible.

It reminds me of the story in the Bible of a lone leper who came back to thank Jesus for curing 10 of them of the disease (Luke 17: 11-19).

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