



*Cain kills Abel ~ Genesis 4:8*

## **The story of Cain and Abel provides insight to God's position on the Death Penalty.**

Excerpt from Pope John Paul II's *The Gospel of Life: Evangelium Vitae...*

After Cain killed his brother Abel, Cain is cursed by God and also by the earth, which will deny him its fruit (cf. *Gen 4:11-12*). *He is punished*: he will live in the wilderness and the desert. Murderous violence profoundly changes man's environment. From being the "garden of Eden" (*Gen: 2:15*), a place of plenty, of harmonious interpersonal relationships and of friendship with God, the earth becomes "the land of Nod" (*Gen: 4:16*), a place of scarcity, loneliness and separation from God. Cain will be "a fugitive and a wanderer of the earth" (*Gen: 4:14*): uncertainty and restlessness will follow him forever.

And yet God, who is always merciful even when he punishes, "*put a mark on Cain*, lest any who came upon him should kill him" (*Gen: 4:15*). He thus gave him a distinctive sign, not to condemn him to the hatred of others, but to protect and defend him from those wishing to kill him, even out of a desire to avenge Abel's death. *Not even a murderer loses his personal dignity*, and God himself pledges to guarantee this.

According to Saint Ambrose, "... God drove Cain out of his presence and sent him into exile far away from his native land, so that he passed from a life of human kindness to one which was more akin to the rude existence of a wild beast. God, who preferred the correction rather than the death of a sinner, did not desire that a homicide be punished by the exaction of another act of homicide."