

Death penalty opponents hope book will help end executions

March 20, 2009

NEW YORK (RNS)—Religious opponents of the death penalty hope a new book about a Texas death row case by a best-selling author can help their efforts to end the practice of state-sanctioned executions.

Thomas Cahill's just-published book, *A Saint on Death Row*, chronicles the life of Dominique Green, who at age 30 was executed by lethal injection in 2004 for his role in a robbery that resulted in one man's death. The victim's family asked that Green's life be spared, but he was executed anyway.

"Dominique Green's was one of the many needless Texas executions," said Cahill, the author of such best-selling books as *How the Irish Saved Civilization* and *The Gifts of the Jews*.

Among those championing the case of Green, who underwent what has been described as a sincere embrace of the principles of nonviolence, was Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

Tutu, long a proponent of nonviolence and forgiveness, became a hero to Green and visited the young man while Green was on death row.

At a recent appearance with Cahill at New York's Riverside Church, Tutu upbraided the United States for its continued practice of the death penalty. The South African cleric noted the United States, were it a European country, could not join the European Union because the EU bars membership to nations that condone the death penalty.

"Why do you do this?" Tutu asked. "What are you doing to yourselves, you wonderful, generous people? You are brutalizing yourselves. ... It is making

you an obscene nation.”

David Atwood, founder of the [Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty](#), told the Riverside audience he and other death penalty opponents in Texas, many acting out of religious convictions, realize they are fighting an entrenched “system of death,” but remain hopeful that ultimately the death penalty will end in Texas.

Texas leads the nation in the number of executions. Atwood said 435 have been carried out in the state since 1982. Twelve have been carried out this year, with the latest occurring the day Cahill and Tutu spoke at Riverside.