

## Poll: Catholics likely to favor use of torture

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Prisoners at Guantanamo Bay Washington D.C., May 3, 2009 / 05:30 pm (CNA).- A new survey from the Pew Center Forum on Religion & Public Life claims that Catholics are more likely than the general population to favor the use of torture against suspected terrorists. The survey of 742 American adults asked whether the use of torture can often, sometimes, rarely or never be justified. About 19 percent of white non-Hispanic Catholics said they believed that the use of torture against suspected terrorists can often be justified, while 32 percent said it can sometimes be justified. About 27 percent said the practice can rarely be justified, while only 20 percent said it can never be justified. The Catechism of the Catholic Church condemns torture, saying that which "uses physical or moral violence to extract confessions, punish the guilty, frighten opponents, or satisfy hatred" is "contrary to respect for the person and for human dignity." Pope John Paul II's 1993 encyclical *Veritas Splendor*, reiterating the Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, described "physical and mental torture and attempts to coerce the spirit" as being "hostile to life." Bishop of Albany, New York Howard J. Hubbard of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee on International Justice and Peace has also spoken out against torture. He was a signatory to the National Religious Campaign against Torture's January 9 letter to President-elect Barack Obama. The letter asked President Barack Obama "to restore our nation's moral standing in the world by rejecting the practice of torture." According to the Pew Center poll, white mainline Protestants were slightly less likely than Catholics to say torture can often or sometimes be justified, at a respective rate of 15 and 31 percent. White evangelical Protestant respondents said torture can often be justified at a rate of 18 percent, while 44 percent held that it can sometimes be justified. The religiously unaffiliated were least likely to approve of using torture against suspected terrorists, with only 15 percent saying it can often be justified and 25 percent saying it can never be justified. White mainline Protestants were most likely to say torture can never be justified, at a rate of 31 percent, while 26 percent of the unaffiliated shared that position. Those who attend religious services at least weekly were more likely to support torture, with 16 percent saying it can often be justified and 38 percent saying it can sometimes be justified. Only 25 percent of regular churchgoers said the practice can never be justified. Those who attended religious services seldom or never were least likely to approve of torture. Only 12 percent said it can often be justified, while 30 percent said it can sometimes be justified and 26 percent said it can never be justified. CNA contacted the Pew Research Center for additional details and was told all analysis on the data had been published. <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/utiles/myprint/print.php>