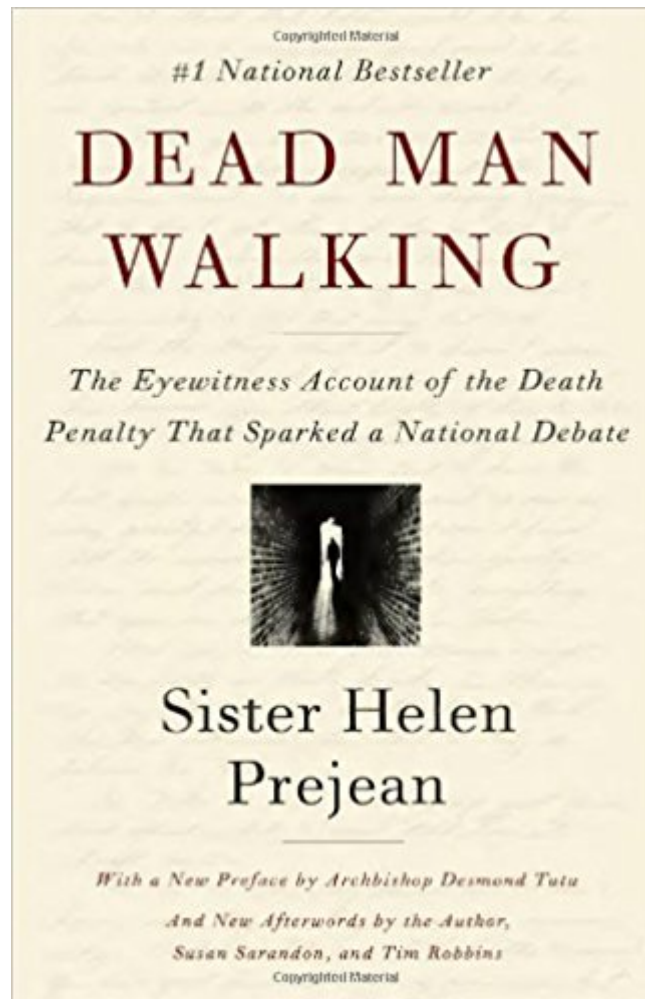


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# Dead Man Walking: The Eyewitness Account Of The Death Penalty That Sparked A National Debate



## Synopsis

In 1982, Sister Helen Prejean became the spiritual advisor to Patrick Sonnier, the convicted killer of two teenagers who was sentenced to die in the electric chair of Louisiana's Angola State Prison. In the months before Sonnier's death, the Roman Catholic nun came to know a man who was as terrified as he had once been terrifying. She also came to know the families of the victims and the men whose job it was to execute "men who often harbored doubts about the rightness of what they were doing." Out of that dreadful intimacy comes a profoundly moving spiritual journey through our system of capital punishment. Here Sister Helen confronts both the plight of the condemned and the rage of the bereaved, the fears of a society shattered by violence and the Christian imperative of love. On its original publication in 1993, *Dead Man Walking* emerged as an unprecedented look at the human consequences of the death penalty. Now, some two decades later, this story "which has inspired a film, a stage play, an opera and a musical album" is more gut-wrenching than ever, stirring deep and life-changing reflection in all who encounter it.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I am currently attending theological seminary, and the film "Dead Man Walking" inspired me to look into prison ministry. Helen Prejean's personal account of her work at Angola State Prison was even more inspiring than the film. I agree wholeheartedly with her theology that we must love even those who have done evil things, for every human being is a CHILD OF GOD. Jesus Christ called us to love one another, and Prejean firmly practices Christian love in what I believe to be its true sense:

loving ALL human beings, regardless of their deeds. Prejean brought to light the corruption of our criminal justice system, and I was shocked but trustworthy of her data. As a first-year seminary student, I identified with her initial fear and uneasiness at entering a project about which she knew little, and I applaud her ability to befriend convicted rapists and murderers honestly, yet without condoning their crimes. I am a Protestant woman studying to become a minister, so in some ways my life will differ from Sister Helen's, but I can only pray for the strength to emulate her, and I thank her for her great inspiration.

When I first seen the movie for "Dead Man Walking" a few years ago I was captivated right away by this story of Redemption! I must say however, the book is so much better because in all honesty that blended the stories of Patrick Sonnier & Robert Lee Willie who was also sentenced to die in the electric chair. This Book has completely changed my view on Capital Punishment. I used to believe in the "Eye for an Eye" Scripture when I read this book it got me to thinking, would Jesus Christ if he were living on earth today would he pull the switch or inject these poisons into someones body? I don't think Christ would do that! I'm not saying that I don't understand the victim's family's rage and want for revenge because I do. My point is this though Yes, Patrick Sonnier & Robert Lee Willie committed some horrible crimes and I in no way condone what these two men did, however I have learned things about Capital Murder trials that it is more expensive to execute a prisoner than life imprisonment is. Sister Helen Prejean is a wonderful writer and she draws you into the book. I felt like I was there with Patrick Sonnier & Robert Lee Willie. This book has completely changed everything on my outlook on the subject of the Death Penalty here in the United States and now I do think it should be abolished. These are just my opinions of course, but if you have ever been torn over the Death Penalty I recommend this book to anyone who can remain open to both sides read this book! The decision is yours on whether you will let it change your heart or not! My heart has changed!

What makes this book so intense is that you know it's real. It is well written, descriptive without being overbearing and detached enough to give you a fair perspective. The movie runs along similar lines as the book, except the method of execution, and the book delves into far more detail, as you would expect. Although an anti-death penalty activist, Helen Prejean has not written a anti-death penalty book. It's a straightforward narrative that draws the reader in and doesn't let go. She is a very talented lady and you feel a huge respect for what she does. Very compelling reading.

When I started reading this book some years ago, I was staunchly for the death penalty. On the other side, I was staunchly opposed. Such is the power and vibrancy of Helen Prejean's writing. She takes you inside the prison walls, inside the mind of the men who commit these desperate acts, the lives they've destroyed by these acts, and the long trek out of the dark night of evil. For some, the journey ends in forgiveness, for others in a hatred and an emptiness. This book will make this sort of crime and punishment real to anyone that reads it, and whatever opinion formed afterwards will be a better-informed one.

This book gripped me from the opening page. I had not ever questioned myself much about the death penalty until this most excellently written book. I praise Sister Prejean for sharing her heart and life with the suffering, the suffering of not one, but many. This book will forever be embedded in me, and especially since I am going to be playing her in our community theater in six weeks. I am honored to be portraying this strong woman of faith. I wish everyone would read this story.

I had the pleasure of meeting sister Helen quite a few times, and she was an inspiring woman. I have to admit, that before meeting her I had no interest in reviewing my opinion on the death penalty, but after sitting through a few seminars of hers, I decided to read the book. What I found was an inspiring account of friendship between Helen and the inmates, and Helen and the families of the victims. This book rang with truth. It was very informative as well. After reading the book and meeting the amazing woman behind it, I began going to candlelight vigils at Angola (the prison in the book), the night of execution. I now believe completely in her cause, and recommend this book to anyone who is at all interested in capital punishment, or even human nature.

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