



Sisters of the Holy Family

To seek out and advocate for the poor and needy, especially families, for the Kingdom of God.

Prayer

As Catholic women religious, we are committed to a consistent life ethic, which means reverence for all of life. With the Bishops of the United States, we believe that our witness to respect life shines most brightly when we demand respect for each and every human life, including the lives of those who fail to show that respect for others.

Prayer to End the Use of the Death Penalty

Merciful God, we ask your blessing on all we do to build a culture of life. Hear our prayers for those impacted by the death penalty.

We pray for all people, that their lives and dignity as children of a loving God may be respected and protected in all stages and circumstances.

We pray for victims of violence and their families, that they may experience our love and support and find comfort in your compassion and in the promise of eternal life.

We pray for those on death row, that their lives may be spared, that the innocent may be freed and that the guilty may come to acknowledge their faults and seek reconciliation with you.

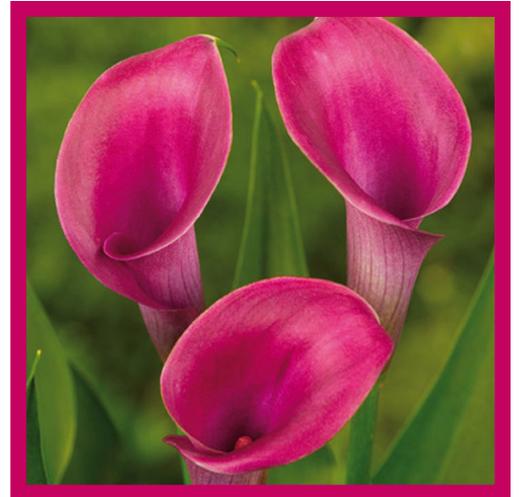
We pray for the families of those who are facing execution, that they may be comforted by your love and compassion.

We pray for civic leaders, that they may commit themselves to respecting every human life and ending the use of the death penalty in our land.

Compassionate God, give us wisdom and hearts filled with your love. Guide us as we work to end the use of the death penalty and to build a society that truly chooses life in all situations.

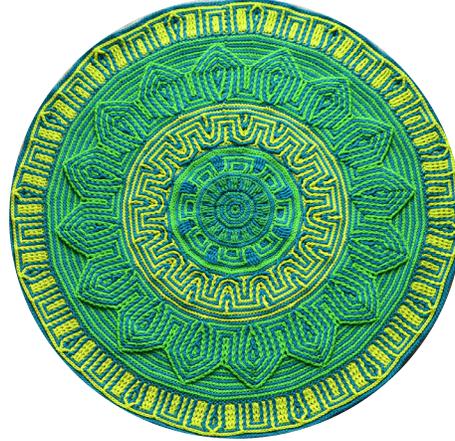
We ask this Father through your Son Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.

Amen



REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS & GROUPS

- Although the Pope has been a strong advocate for the abolition of the death penalty and has called for humane treatment and respect for all prisoners despite their crimes, 53 percent of Catholics support capital punishment. Why do you think this is so?
- If you had to summarize your general feelings on the death penalty, what would you say? How long have you held your current views on the death penalty? Have your views changed at all over time?
- Do you have relatives or friends who have been the victims of violent crimes? How do those experiences shape your views toward crime and, more specifically, the death penalty? In what circumstances, if any, do you feel the death penalty is an appropriate sentence? What has shaped your opinions on the Death penalty? Your religious background? Family and friends? The media? Other sources?



- To what extent have you followed executions that have taken place in your state?
- Are there alternatives to the death penalty that you believe would promote both public safety and respect for life? Does the death penalty give comfort to the victims' families?
- How can faith communities help victims of crime heal from the tragedy they have experienced? What can faith communities do to help break the cycle of violence in our society?
- How does healing occur for the family members of someone convicted of a capital crime, or executed by the state? What is our role in assisting with their healing?
- Many death penalty abolitionists believe that capital punishment denies the humanity of the individual and the possibility of rehabilitation. How do you feel about a convicted murderer's capacity for rehabilitation?

Prayers for Restorative Justice

God of compassion, you love all people without distinction. Your grace is beyond our understanding. In Jesus, you offered forgiveness to all sinners, without exception. You still do.

Our limited vision and knowledge, our fears and prejudices, restrict the flow of grace to those who need it most. Move us, we pray, to break down the walls that imprison us. Help us to reach out to those imprisoned so we can be instruments of your grace and so offer healing. Help us also to reach out to victims of crime in ways that they too may find healing for the pain they have experienced.

We pray for our leaders and our criminal justice system to focus on restorative rather than retributive justice. Bring renewal to our hearts, renewal to our society, that we would “do justice... love kindness, and... walk humbly with your God.” (Mic 6:8)

Amen



We confess that we are a wounded people, a people who act out of brokenness in the midst of our yearning for wholeness.

So we feel the need to recall your promise of good news for the poor, liberty for the captives, sight for the blind

This is Good News that we need now, for we are poor when we feel no hope.

We are captives when vengeance fills our hearts.

We are blind when we do not recognize the humanity of our neighbors.

We are oppressed when grief paralyzes us.

And we turn to gaze upon forgiving love lifted high,

an offer of restoration for our lives, our families, our communities, an unspoken Word from one heart to another...

Deepen our gratitude.

Open us to the grace that stirs imaginative action. Strengthen now the commitment of your people,

Oh Lord, that we might continue your work, a work for restoring and binding people together.

Bless our ponderings and travels for we will enter places where we hear that safety lies in a ‘justice’ that keeps score and gets tough on crime, an empty justice detached from mercy.

Amen

*act justly,
love mercy,
walk humbly
with your God.
micah 6:8*

Social justice
cannot be
attained by
violence.
Violence kills
what it intends
to create.

Pope John Paul II

As one whose husband and mother-in-law have died the victims of murder assassination, I stand firmly and unequivocally opposed to the death penalty for those convicted of capital offenses. An evil deed is not redeemed by an evil deed of retaliation. Justice is never advanced in the taking of a human life. Morality is never upheld by a legalized murder. – Coretta Scott King

No matter how heinous the crime, if society can protect itself without ending a human life, it should do so. – USCCB, A Culture of Life and the Penalty of Death



Peace and justice are two sides of the same coin. – Dwight D. Eisenhower

An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind. – Ghandi

I realize that I cannot standby silently as my government executes its citizens. If I do not speak out and resist, I am an accomplice. – Sr. Helen Prejean, C.S.J.

Why do we kill people who are killing people to show that killing people is wrong? – Holly Near



What You Can Do

- What can you do to help end the Death Penalty?
- Pray for an end to this travesty of justice.
- Promote and advocate for the end of the death penalty.
- Protest at death sites.
- Become involved in prison ministry and minister to those who have been released from prisons.
- Pray for those scheduled for execution along with prayers for the victims of these crimes and their families.

