

Litany for an End to the Death Penalty

“We oppose capital punishment not just for what it does to those guilty of horrible crimes, but for what it does to all of us as a society. Increasing reliance on the death penalty diminishes all of us and is a sign of growing disrespect for human life. We cannot overcome crime by simply executing criminals, nor can we restore the lives of the innocent by ending the lives of those convicted of their murders. The death penalty offers the tragic illusion that we can defend life by taking life.”

U.S. Catholic Bishops, *A Good Friday Appeal to End the Death Penalty*, April 2, 1999

Leader: God of Life, we come before you recognizing that our acquiescence to the death penalty has degraded all of society. By allowing the disrespect of the human life of one criminal, we have weakened our respect for the dignity of the lives of all people.

By infringing on the right to life of one of your children, we have infringed on the rights of all human citizens of this world.

We are a broken society. The fabric of our society is pulled and torn from all directions as the voices of the world tempt us to give in to hate, to seek revenge, and to disrespect human life. Let us stand with the Catholic Bishops and Popes, past and present, and defend life by preserving it in all its forms.

We pray for our society, that it may be transformed to truly respect the dignity of the human person, and in doing so, respect the dignity of life in all of society. We pray to the Lord . . .

All: God of Life, hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for all elected officials, that they may govern with compassion and create policies that promote life instead of death and reconciliation instead of hate. We pray to the Lord . . .

All: God of Life, hear our prayer.

Leader: For all victims of terrible crimes and their families, that they may experience healing and God’s love during a very difficult time . . .

All: God of Life, hear our prayer.

Leader: For the prison system, that we might work to transform it into a system of restoration and healing. We pray to the Lord . . .

All: God of Life, hear our prayer.



DEATH PENALTY

Leader: For all prison employees, that they may respect prisoners as fellow human beings and encourage them on their journey of transformation and growth, We pray to the Lord . . .

All: God of Life, hear our prayer.

Leader: For all prisoners, that they may have the courage not to become embittered or hopeless, and that they may seek what is life-giving. We pray to the Lord . . .

All: God of Life, hear our prayer.

Leader: For all on death row, that they might find comfort in God and in the work of so many to prevent future killings of criminals. We pray to the Lord . . .

All: God of Life, hear our prayer.

Leader: That all may be saved from cruel and unusual punishment, and that this treatment may be seen as incompatible with the dignity of human persons and be finally abolished, we pray to the Lord . . .

All: God of Life, hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for the strength, in the midst of many societal voices that encourage us to seek revenge, that we will instead follow the Catholic Bishops, who stated, “we must commit ourselves to a persistent and principled witness against the death penalty, against a culture of death, and for the Gospel of Life.” We pray to the Lord . . .

All: God of Life, hear our prayer.

Leader: God of Life, transform our spirits and melt the hardness in our hearts. Inspire us to work for justice. Inspire us to be healers of society and reconcilers of people. Help us to uphold life.

All: Amen.