



Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network
UNITED STATES | CANADA APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

September 2022

-For the abolition of the death penalty-

We pray that the death penalty, which attacks the dignity of the human person, may be legally abolished in every country.

Fr Joe SJ video, 1min [here](#)

Pope video, 1min thepopevideo.org

Reflection by Fr. Ted Penton, SJ

Secretary of Justice and Ecology, [Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States](#)

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In my college years I was agnostic and had little time for things of the church. But even then, some of my core convictions lined up closely with church teachings. I felt in the marrow of my bones, for instance, that every human being is capable of redemption. No matter what they might have said or done, so long as life beats within them, there is a possibility of remorse and conversion of heart. I didn't have many strong political beliefs at the time, but I knew deep down that for the state to execute someone, no matter how guilty, was to violate something sacred.

Around that time, I was deeply moved by the film *Dead Man Walking*, appreciating that it did not address the morally easy case of a wrongfully convicted man but instead stared squarely at the reality of someone who had committed an unspeakable atrocity, daring to say that even his life has value. Years later, as a Jesuit novice, I read Sister Helen Prejean's book, on which the film is based. Sister Helen's witness touched me deeply, especially her decision to work with **both** the convicted and the families of the victims, loving, like Jesus, all without distinction.

It saddens and angers me that the death penalty continues to be legal in so many US states. Our prisons are secure and those within them pose no threat to our safety. While I understand the desire that someone pay a price for a crime they have committed, I believe that we as a society are called to something more. Let us join the Pope in his prayer that the death penalty be abolished throughout our own country and around the world.

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[Leader] Daily offering prayer: O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary,
I offer You my prayers, works, joys, and sufferings of this day
in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world.

I offer them for all the intentions of Your Sacred Heart:
the salvation of souls, reparation for sin, and the reunion of all Christians.
I offer them for the intentions of our bishops and of all Apostles of Prayer,
and in particular for those recommended by our Holy Father this month—

*SEPTEMBER: For the abolition of the death penalty. We pray that the death penalty,
which attacks the dignity of the human person, may be legally abolished in every
country.*

Grace: We pray for the abolition of the death penalty, that our criminal justice system may be
guided by the Holy Spirit towards compassion. May God grant us the grace to see Your image
and likeness in all people.

[Reader 1] Scripture: “Pilate again said to them in reply, “Then what [do you want] me to do
with [the man you call] the king of the Jews?” They shouted again, “Crucify him.” Pilate said to
them, “Why? What evil has he done?” They only shouted the louder, “Crucify him.” So Pilate,
wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas to them and, after he had Jesus scourged,
handed him over to be crucified.” (Mark 15:12-15)

[Reader 2] Quote: “There is yet another way to eliminate others, one aimed not at countries but
at individuals. It is the death penalty. Saint John Paul II stated clearly and firmly that the death
penalty is inadequate from a moral standpoint and no longer necessary from that of penal
justice. There can be no stepping back from this position. Today we state clearly that ‘the death
penalty is inadmissible’ and the Church is firmly committed to calling for its abolition worldwide.
Here I would stress that ‘it is impossible to imagine that states today have no other means than
capital punishment to protect the lives of other people from the unjust aggressor’. Particularly
serious in this regard are so-called extrajudicial or extralegal executions, which are ‘homicides
deliberately committed by certain states and by their agents, often passed off as clashes with
criminals or presented as the unintended consequences of the reasonable, necessary and
proportionate use of force in applying the law.’” (Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* #263, 267)

[Leader] Reflection questions:

How can we strive to better see Christ in those facing execution? How can we promote a
society where all human life is held up as valuable? *[All: take 1 min in quiet reflection; 2 min to
journal; and then share a with the group]*

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