



Respect Life Month

2019 TOOLKIT

ABOUT THE TOOLKIT

October is Respect Life Month, a time for Catholics to reflect more deeply on the God-given dignity of all human life. Beginning on Respect Life Sunday (October 6th, 2019), Catholics across the United States will recommit themselves to the work of uplifting this core tenet of our faith: the belief that every life is sacred.

The annual **Respect Life Month Toolkit** from Catholic Mobilizing Network offers dynamic, easy-to-use resources designed to assist Catholic parishes, dioceses, and individuals as they advocate for a culture of life and an end to capital punishment. Inside you'll find prayer service templates, parish bulletin articles, social media resources, and more.

ABOUT CATHOLIC MOBILIZING NETWORK

Catholic Mobilizing Network (CMN) is a national organization that mobilizes Catholics and all people of goodwill to value life over death, to end the use of the death penalty, to transform the U.S. criminal justice system from punitive to restorative, and to build capacity in U.S. society to engage in restorative practices. Through **education, advocacy, and prayer**, and based on the Gospel value that every human is created in the image and likeness of God, CMN expresses the fundamental belief that all those who have caused or been impacted by crime should be treated with dignity.

CMN works in close collaboration with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and lives the Spirit of Unity of its sponsor, the Congregation of St. Joseph.

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EDUCATE

Catholic teaching offers a unique perspective on criminal justice — one that is rooted in a recognition that the dignity of the human person applies to both those who have suffered a harm and those who have caused it.

The following resources are designed to educate the faithful on this belief, as well on the systemic injustices that permeate the United States' criminal justice system. The tools draw upon Scripture, Catholic social teaching, and the personal experiences of those whose lives have been touched by capital punishment.



Infographics and Fact Sheets

Easy to download and share, these resources (pictured above) outline the history of Catholic opposition to the death penalty and illustrate how to create a more restorative path forward.

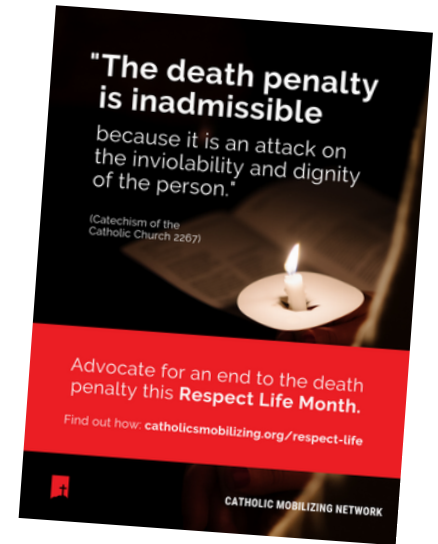
Available for download at: catholicsmobilizing.org/respect-life



Parish Bulletin Pieces

Bulletin Articles: CMN offers a selection of six sample bulletin articles highlighting the ways in which capital punishment violates Catholic Social Teaching. Use them individually or as part of a series to educate parishioners on this critical life issue.

Bulletin Graphic (pictured): Incorporate graphics in your parish's weekly bulletin throughout the month of October as a quick and easy way to include the death penalty in your Respect Life Month programming.

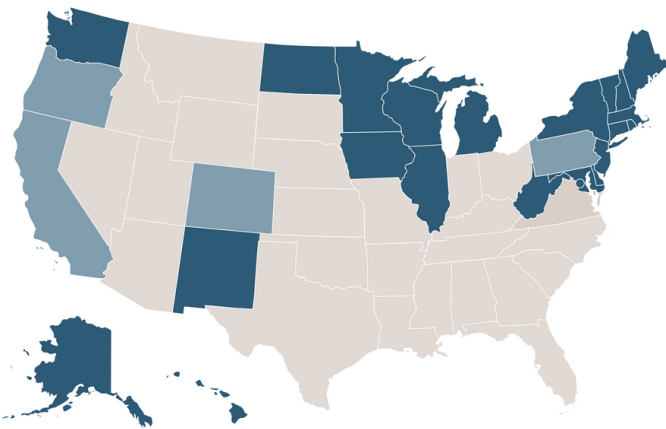


Available for download at: catholicsmobilizing.org/respect-life

The Death Penalty in Your State

Explore CMN's interactive state pages, and learn more about the status of capital punishment in your state. Each state page features a list of local organizations working toward death penalty abolition, as well as upcoming events, legislative actions, and execution dates.

Access state pages via:
catholicsmobilizing.org/respect-life





Book List

Spanning the issues of both capital punishment and restorative justice, CMN's book list is an excellent starting point for both individual learning and parish/community reading groups.

Includes titles like:

Where Justice and Mercy Meet: Catholic Opposition to the Death Penalty | David Matzko McCarthy, Trudy D. Conway, and Vicki Schieber, Editors

Harm, Healing, and Human Dignity: A Catholic Encounter with Restorative Justice | Caitlin Morneau, Adaptor

Dead Man Walking: The Eyewitness Account of the Death Penalty | Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ

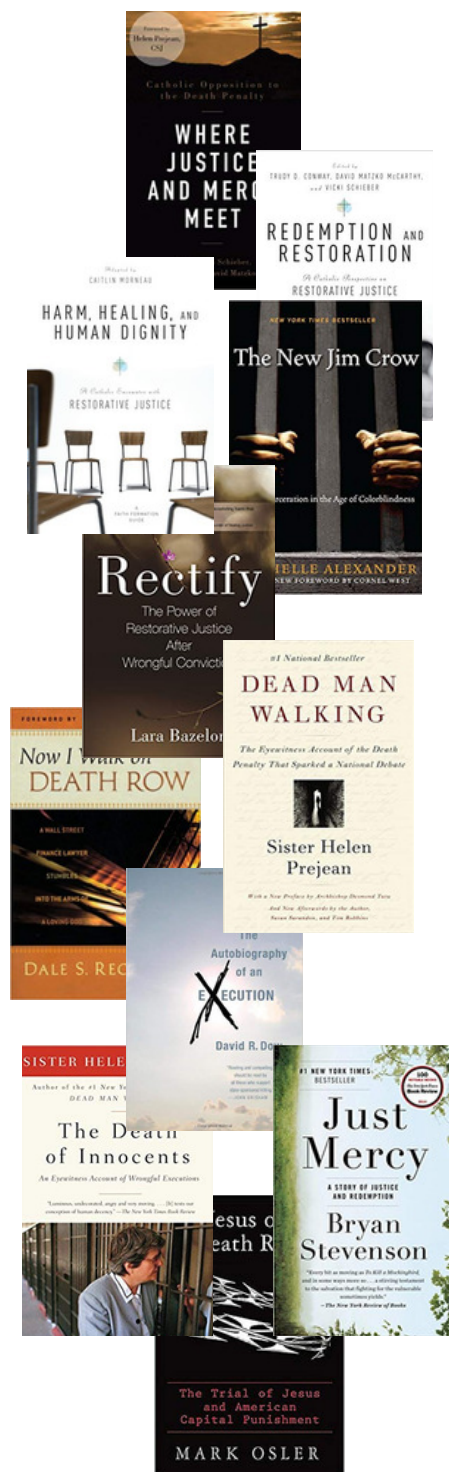
Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption | Bryan Stevenson

The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness | Michelle Alexander

Changing Lenses: Restorative Justice for Our Times | Howard Zehr

Executing Grace: How the Death Penalty Killed Jesus and Why It's Killing Us | Shane Claiborne

Get the complete Book List:
catholicismobilizing.org/respect-life





Film List

A compilation of CMN's favorite films and documentaries exploring the issues of capital punishment and restorative justice.

Includes titles like:

Dead Man Walking | Directed by Tim Robbins

In the Executioner's Shadow | Directed by Maggie Burnette Stogner and Rick Stack

Lindy Lou, Juror Number Two | Directed by Florent Vassault

Where There Is Darkness | Directed by Cimela Kidonakis and Sean Bloomfield

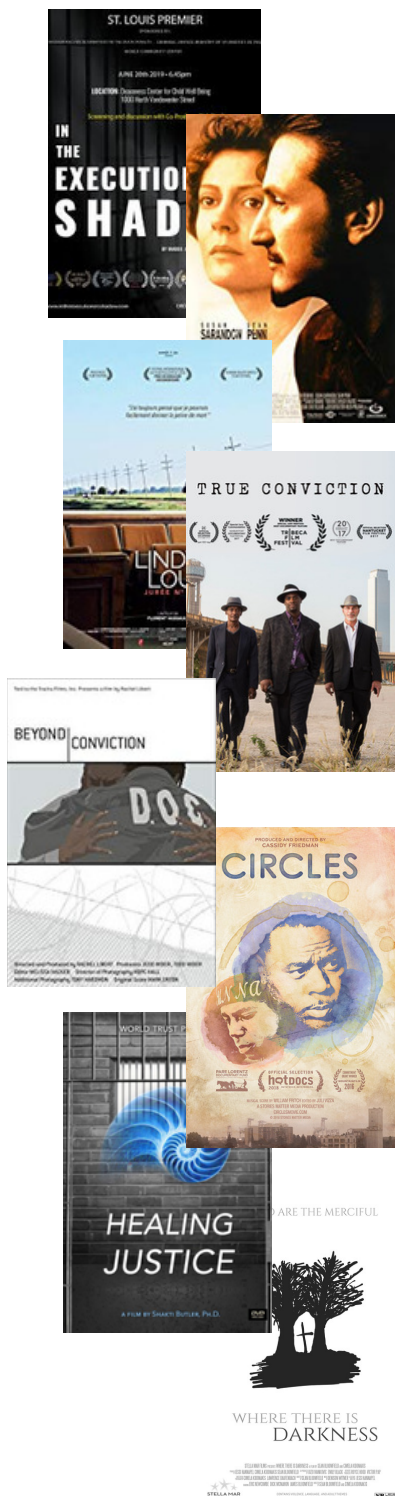
True Conviction | Directed by Jamie Meltzer

Beyond Conviction | Directed by Rachel Libert

Circles | Directed by Cassidy Friedman

Healing Justice | Directed by Shakti Butler, Ph.D.

Get the complete Film List:
catholicmobilizing.org/respect-life





Catholic Social Teaching

Rooted in both Scripture and the rich tradition of our faith, Catholic Social Teaching is a guide for how to live as people of justice and mercy.

Catholic Social Teaching brings the teachings of Jesus and his call to discipleship to the larger societal conversation of social justice.

Catholic Social Teaching & the Death Penalty Guide

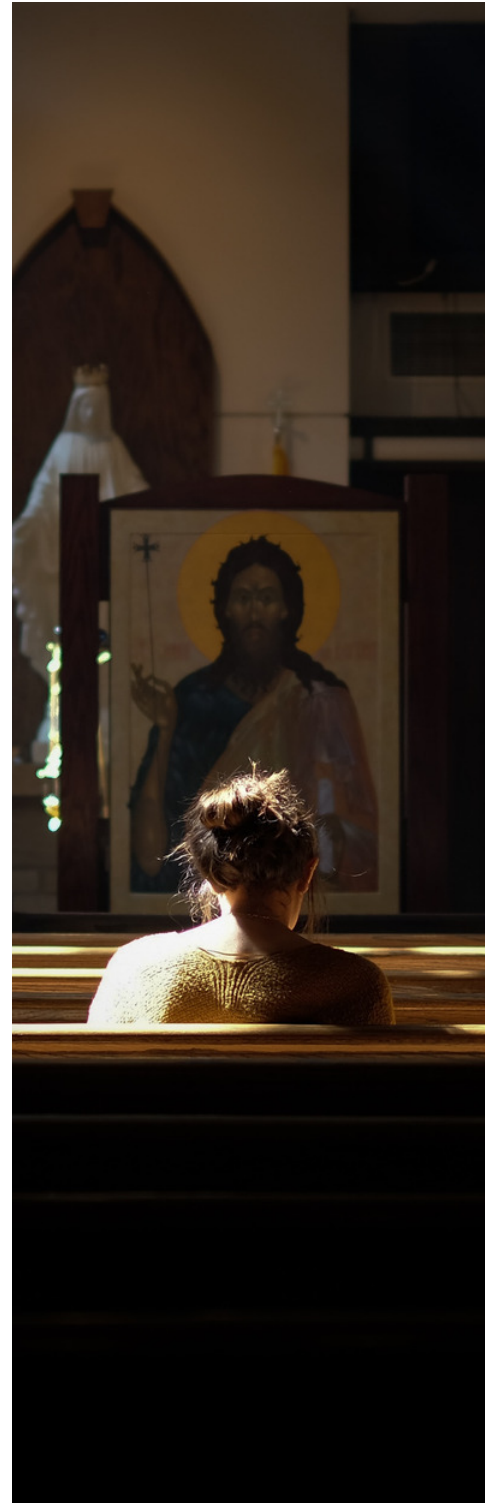
Violating several core themes of Catholic Social Teaching, the death penalty inherently diminishes the dignity of human life. Our Catholic faith calls us to uphold life over death.

Learn more: catholicismobilizing.org/respect-life

Catholic Social Teaching & Restorative Justice Guide

The major themes of Catholic Social Teaching are evident in restorative justice principles and practices. This intersection is critical as we seek build a more just and healing criminal justice system.

Learn more: catholicismobilizing.org/respect-life





Videos

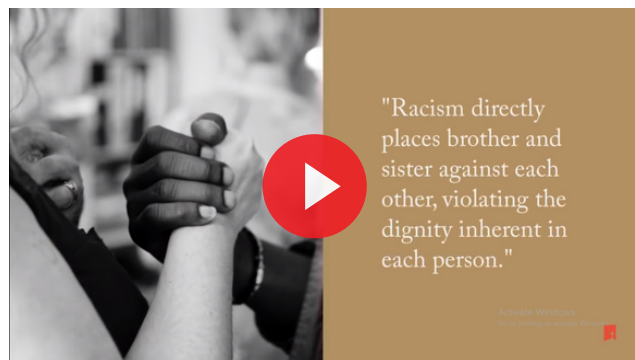
These short videos, created by CMN, highlight key lessons from the Catholic Church's teaching on the issues of capital punishment and racism.

Available at: catholicismobilizing.org/respect-life

What Does the Church Say About Capital Punishment?



Is Racism a Life Issue?



Hope Over Death Blog

Across the United States, Catholics and people of faith are transforming our broken criminal justice system into one that values healing over vengeance, and hope over death.

Visit CMN's Hope Over Death Blog and join us as we uplift the lived experiences, ministerial examples, and spiritual reflections of those working to end the death penalty and promote restorative justice.

Learn more: catholicismobilizing.org/respect-life



ADVOCATE

Advocacy is a way to promote public policy that upholds the sanctity of all life and supports the common good. The Catholic call to faithful citizenship affirms the importance of participation in the public square and encourages us to make our voices heard. The parish community is an excellent forum for organizing and making an impact.

Your voice matters. You do not need to be an expert to speak up for the dignity of human life. Start advocating against the use of the death penalty today:



Social Media

Amplify the Church's pro-life message on social media! We'll get you started with some high-impact graphics and sample tweets.

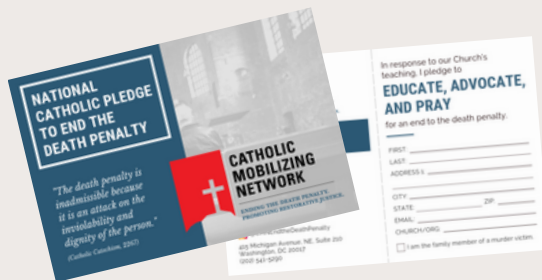
Available at: catholicsmobilizing.org/respect-life



National Catholic Pledge to End the Death Penalty

More than 25,000 Catholics and people of faith have pledged to educate, advocate, and pray for an end to the death penalty. Add your name to join them in building a culture of life.

Order pledge cards for your parish or diocese! Contact Emma Tacke for more information:
emmat@catholicismobilizing.org



The Mercy in Action Project

CMN's Mercy in Action Project gives you the tools you need to promote clemency for those on death row. Subscribers receive monthly alerts about upcoming executions with resources for prayer and advocacy.

Sign up: **catholicismobilizing.org/respect-life**

Faith & Action First Fridays

Fridays hold special significance in the Catholic tradition. CMN created Faith & Action First Fridays as a way to bring Christ's mercy to the broken system of capital punishment. On the first Friday of each month, subscribers receive a selection of timely resources for education, advocacy, and prayer.

Subscribe: **catholicismobilizing.org/respect-life**



Execution Actions

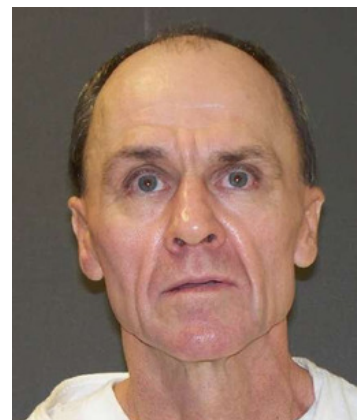
There are five executions* scheduled to take place this October. As part of your Respect Life Month advocacy, please consider advocating for clemency on behalf of **Russell Bucklew**, **Stephen Barbee**, **Randy Halprin**, **Randall Mays**, and **Ruben Gutierrez**.

Advocating for clemency is simple; all it takes is a few clicks. Learn more at:
catholicismobilizing.org/respect-life

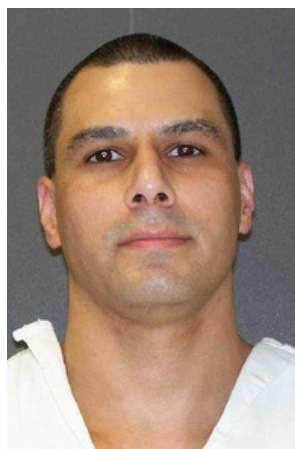
Russell Bucklew



Randall Mays



Stephen Barbee



Ruben Gutierrez



Randy Halprin

*Subject to change. For a current list of October executions, please visit:
deathpenaltyinfo.org/executions/upcoming-executions

The culture of life we seek is built on a foundation of prayer. CMN holds prayer as a vital part of our call to end the death penalty and promote restorative justice. The following resources will help guide your discernment around ways in which you can build a culture of life.

Gather with fellow advocates during one or more of these five executions, scheduled to take place this Respect Life Month, reflecting together on themes of mercy and forgiveness in the face of capital punishment. Intended for use in the days leading up to an execution or as an execution is taking place, this powerful prayer experience serves to deepen participants' commitment to the work to end the death penalty.

Download the printable template: catholicsmobilizing.org/respect-life

The Lord's Prayer

Let us now join hands and pray together as Jesus taught us:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
Amen.

Closing Prayer

Loving God,
 As we go forward in work for the sanctity of life we
 ask to be filled with your mercy and grace.
 Help us to not grow weary of this task to end the
 death penalty, but rather to remain steadfast in our
 mission to spread reconciliation and compassion.
 Teach us the ways of your grace as we lift up the
 dignity of hu
 manity and v
 in the name,
 Amen.

Closing Sc

Jesus, Rome



Reflection I (Adapt as Necessary)

Forgiveness is a vital part of our faith; it is something we are called to do every day and something we ask of and receive unconditionally from God. While a central role in Jesus' ministry and our call to discipleship, the forgiveness we receive on the cross can be understood as profoundly unique. What is it that we "know not what [we] do"? What act is so important to our human nature, so inescapable, that Jesus must take the time to intercede for us from the cross? What, if, rather than seen as a pardon for our many acts of violence or for the greatest act of violence we committed that day on the cross, Jesus was forgiving us for those times when we do not have the strength to do so? In this act from the cross, Jesus can be seen as forgiving beyond the human capacity. "What if God, in that moment, provided forgiveness for the unforgivable?"

Victims of grave harm need healing and mercy. Tragedy and loss, violence and harm are things we must not gloss over. Mourning and lament are vital paths that all who experience violence must journey through. In forgiving us — all of us — on the cross, Jesus created space for those who seem beyond the task of forgiveness and of being forgiven. This act allows the spirit to accompany us and feel without blame the fullness of our human emotion. From the cross, from the point of death, Jesus creates for us a space to both feel and forgive. May we not forget this gift. May we find the space and strength to feel our gravest wounds and yet live with mercy towards all human life.

¹Some David MDiv, "Luke 23: 33-36" Lecture, The Paulist Center's Seven Last Words of Christ, <http://www.paulistcenter.org/sevenlastwords/sevenlastwords.htm>.

Opening Song

Tree of Life, Marty Haugen (suggested)

Opening Prayer

God of mercy

We gather to pray for an end to the many acts of violence occurring in our society.

We pray in a special way for all those impacted by the use of the death penalty.

Guide us with your love and compassion, O God, as we strive to be vessels of your mercy and live in a manner that lifts up the dignity of all life.

Help us to live the path of discipleship and faith as we work to end the death penalty and promote a more restorative justice system.

Amen

First Reading | Luke 23: 33-35

then they came to I
sacred him and the
other on his left. I
am, they know not
ments by casting
fished; the rulers, m
id. "He saved others
seen one, the Mes

Second Reading | Matthew 27: 45-46

From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'



Intercessions

For Pope Francis and those in leadership in the Church, as they work to end a culture of death and promote a culture of life. Give them strength as they work to end all that which threatens the God-given dignity of human life. We pray, **God of mercy, hear our prayer.**

For the lawyers and legal teams who work to save the lives of those on death row: May they be filled with your strength and grace so as to never tire of the fight for the dignity of life. We pray. **God of mercy, hear our prayer.**

For all prison personnel tasked with conducting executions. May they always know your grace and compassion as they are asked to perform these acts of harm. We pray, **God of mercy, hear our prayer.**

For all those impacted by acts of grave harm, especially [Name of Victim and their Family Members], May they and all victims of crime know your healing power and be transformed by your mercy. We pray, **God of mercy, hear our prayer.**

For all those on death row awaiting execution, especially
 (Name of Person Awaiting Execution), May they know

Reflection II (Adapt as Necessary)

How do we understand God's silence in times of great suffering? How do we reconcile a God who loves humanity with a God who seemingly allows harm and violence to bear through our society? How do we bear witness to capital punishment's intrinsic disregard for human life and still live in a manner that upholds the dignity of each human person? If we have the courage to remain at the cross with Jesus at this very moment, we may begin to understand what it means to live the Christian life. In Christ's suffering and death on the cross is revealed a God whose solidarity is willing to bear the suffering of this broken world.¹

We, in turn, are also invited to share in that suffering. We are called to do more than just witness, however; we must fulfill the call to live in a way that not only shares in the suffering of our world but takes action to address that suffering. Our merciful acts that lift up the dignity of the human person begin to fill the silence we feel in these grave moments of suffering.

Our lament for all those lives lost by the violence of crime and the use of the death penalty serves as acts of faith, a protest that never accepts God's silence but joins God as we stand with and for all who suffer in this world. May we have the courage to remain at the cross and be inspired by the abandonment felt by all those, like Jesus, left to die at the hands of the state.

¹⁰ Ernesto Valente, "Mark 15: 33-34" Lecture, The Paulist Center's Seven Last Words Eucharistic Service, Boston, MA, April 14, 2017.



St. Maximilian Kolbe Prayer Service

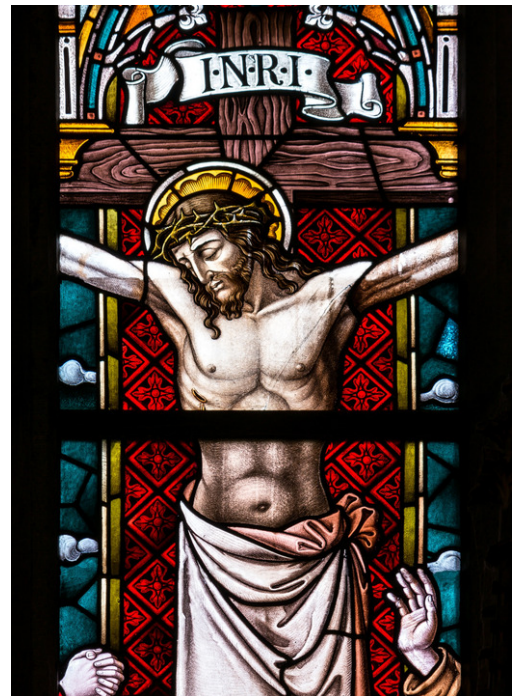
This prayer service focuses on the life and ministry of St. Maximilian Kolbe, patron saint of prisoners and the pro-life movement. The service lifts up the work of all pro-life advocates and highlights in a particular way the Catholic call to end the use of the death penalty.

Download: catholicismobilizing.org/respect-life

Holy Hour of Mercy

Immerse your self in an hour of prayer dedicated to the dignity of life and an end of the death penalty. Prayers in this Holy Hour include the St. Michael the Archangel Prayer, The Divine Mercy Chaplet, and a Litany for Life.

Access at: catholicismobilizing.org/respect-life





Sample Prayers of the Faithful for Respect Life Month

Priest: Loving Father, we pray for your grace and strength as we seek to build a culture of life.

Lector: For Pope Francis and those in leadership in the Church, as they work to end the culture of death and promote a culture of life. Give them strength as they work to end all that which threatens the God-given dignity of human life.

We pray, **God of mercy, hear our prayer.**

For lawmakers and elected officials. May your spirit of love and compassion transform their hearts and inspire them to place the needs of human life above all.

We pray, **God of mercy, hear our prayer.**

For all those impacted by crime and acts of harm. May the victims of crime and their families know your healing power and be transformed by your mercy.

We pray, **God of mercy, hear our prayer.**

For all those on death row awaiting execution, and those lives we have lost to the death penalty. May they know your unending love and forgiveness as children of God.

We pray, **God of mercy, hear our prayer.**

For all the prayers we hold in the silence of our hearts May we know the comfort of God's love.

We pray, **God of mercy, hear our prayer.**

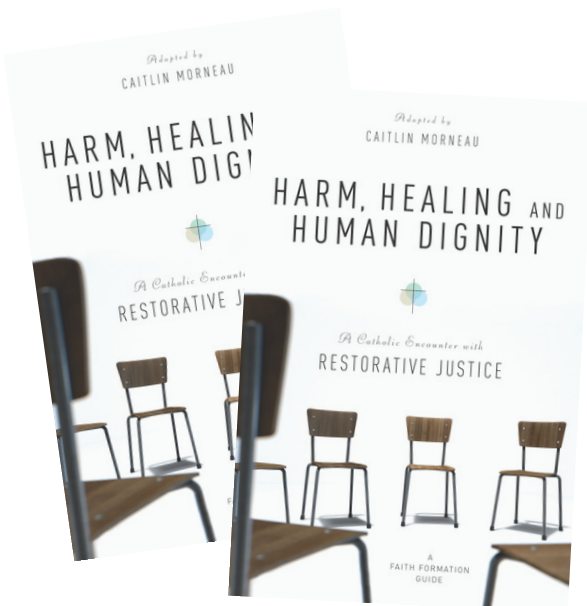
Priest: God of Compassion, through the guidance of your Holy Spirit, may we be witnesses to your mercy, proclaiming that every human life is precious and created by you. We pray in the name of Jesus the Lord. Amen.



Small Group Modules

In the span of four evening sessions, CMN's educational modules provide an opportunity for small groups to learn about restorative justice and to consider how it relates to our Catholic faith.

Learn more: catholicismobilizing.org/respect-life



Harm, Healing, and Human Dignity

CMN's faith formation booklet, Harm, Healing, and Human Dignity: A Catholic Encounter with Restorative Justice, invites readers to consider the Catholic call to restorative justice through Scripture, stories, and reflection questions.

Learn more: catholicismobilizing.org/respect-life

Death Penalty Prayer Cards

Pray this prayer alone or with others in community, asking God to "sustain our pursuit of reconciling justice, that we may model Christ's compassion and mercy with our lives."

Access at: catholicismobilizing.org/respect-life

For hard copies contact Emma Tacke at:
emmat@catholicismobilizing.org

