



## Respecting the Sanctity of *All* Life: Reaffirming Our Opposition to the Death Penalty

With the continued and increased use of the death penalty, we the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet are impelled to boldly oppose the use of the death penalty and end “the cycle of violence perpetuated by the death penalty.”<sup>1</sup> In this stance, we look to the way of mercy and forgiveness exemplified by Jesus’ own life, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and our CSJ charism. As a congregation of religious women of the great love of God, we value “respect for the sanctity of human life, the protection of human life,”<sup>2</sup> and the sanctity of all life.

Pope Francis calls the use of the death penalty an attack on the dignity of the person and deems capital punishment “inadmissible” in all cases. These words are reflected in the official Catechism of the Catholic Church, which the Vatican updated in 2018.

This issue of capital punishment “challenges our consciences and requires us to act.”<sup>3</sup> Understanding that the death penalty does not provide easy or simple solutions, we continue, as we have for decades, our opposition to the death penalty. Our community, with our partners in mission, has long ministered to and advocated for our siblings on death row including praying, visiting, and writing personal letters.

Enlivened by our charism to move always toward the profound love of God and love of neighbor without distinction, we recommit to peace, nonviolence, and upholding the sanctity of all life. As a community, we reaffirm our opposition by committing to action to end the use of the death penalty locally and nationally.

*Approved by the Congregational Leadership Team, October 26, 2020*

### ACTION STEPS

We, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, commit to:

1. Educate ourselves individually and communally about the death penalty by joining and collaborating with local and national organizations that oppose the death penalty, such as:
  - ❖ [Catholic Mobilizing Network](#)
  - ❖ [Campaign to End the Death Penalty](#)
  - ❖ [Death Penalty Focus](#)
  - ❖ [National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty](#)

- 2.** Support these local and national organizations financially as a congregation, provinces, and individuals.
- 3.** Write letters to our elected officials requesting legislation to abolish the death penalty.
- 4.** Encourage the signing of the “Declaration of Life,” pledging that should we become a victim of a crime, we personally do not want the murderer to receive the death penalty. Templates for a “Declaration of Life” statement are available from [Quaker.org](https://www.quaker.org).
- 5.** Speak out through public witness, such as at prayer vigils for both victims, victims’ families, and people facing execution, including appeals to governors for stays of execution.

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<sup>1</sup> “Additional Chapter Actions,” Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, 1997 Acts of Chapter, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> [Statement on Capital Punishment](#), U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1980.

<sup>3</sup> [The Challenges of Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship](#), USCCB, 2020.