

REMARKS OF HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
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Dear Friends,

Welcome to this house of the Holy Father. In a special way, I want you to know the closeness of Pope Francis, who obviously has a real passion for the goal that you are pursuing: abolishing the death penalty. Thank you for your work.

In recent days and weeks, a number of executions have been carried out in this country, and more are scheduled during the remainder of this year. And yet, the death penalty is “a provision at odds with Christian faith and one that eliminates all hope of forgiveness and rehabilitation” (*Spes Non Confundit*, 10). As the Pope wrote in his Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti*:

“The firm rejection of the death penalty shows to what extent it is possible to recognize the inalienable dignity of every human being and to accept that he or she has a place in this universe” (N. 269).

While not all believers have recognized the incompatibility of capital punishment with our beliefs about human dignity, progress is being made. In his Prayer Video for September 2022, Pope Francis said:

“Each day, there is a growing ‘NO’ to the death penalty around the world. For the Church, this is a sign of hope.... Let us not forget that, up to the very last moment, a person can convert and change.... The commandment, ‘Thou shalt not kill,’ refers to both the innocent and the guilty. I, therefore, call on all people of goodwill to mobilize for the abolition of the death penalty throughout the world. Let us pray that the death penalty...may be legally abolished in every country.”

On behalf of the Holy Father, I am grateful to the Catholic Mobilization Network for responding to this call through your faith-filled education, advocacy, and prayer. In particular, I want to thank you for doing this work in a truly ecclesial way: in union with the Pope and Bishops, under the leadership of gifted lay women and men, and in collaboration with people across the broad ethnic and political spectrum of the Church and society. Yours is a truly synodal work, which is not seeking merely to score a political victory, but is seeking to build just relationships, promote accountability, and help the transformation of society.

Thank you very much; and enjoy your celebration this evening!