

For Whom the Bells Toll

The Death Penalty Abolition and Restorative Justice (DP-RJ) team encourages all Marianist communities to call for the end of the death penalty in our country. The [For Whom the Bells Toll](#) campaign invites people of faith to publicly express opposition to executions and to pray for all of those impacted in the aftermath of murder. [Click here to watch the one-minute video.](#)



In 1987, the Philippines became the first Asian country to abolish capital punishment. When it was reinstated in 1993, Cardinal Jaime Sin, the Archbishop of Manila, asked churches to toll their bells as a "prophetic cry of indignation" and a sign of mourning for any state-sponsored death. In 1999, Bishop Walter Sullivan of the Diocese of Richmond, Virginia, wrote to all the Catholic churches in his diocese to toll church bells or display a banner opposing capital punishment "on the evening of every execution until we bring an end to this inhumane practice." Also, during the 1990s, Sister Dorothy Briggs, O.P., began a national campaign inviting churches and other places of worship to toll their bells for two minutes at 6 p.m. on the day of an execution anywhere in the country. Now this "For Whom the Bells Toll" campaign is being revived by Death Penalty Action, one of our MSJC partners, in the effort to end state-ordered executions.

"Each of us is more than the worst thing we've ever done."

*-Bryan Stevenson, *Just Mercy**

As Christians we are called to attend to the most vulnerable and marginalized, including victims of great harm as well as those facing execution. We are asked to place the value and dignity of the human person at the center of our concern. The Church's teaching on the death penalty centers the dignity of every human person. This teaching is not yet widely known...

The Church teaches, in the light of the Gospel, that "the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person",

and she works with determination for its abolition worldwide. -*Catechism of the Catholic Church #2267*

There are eight states that have scheduled executions in the coming months. (See [Upcoming Executions](#)) Even if you live in a state that does not have the death penalty, you and your parish can still pray for those impacted, acknowledge and mourn the taking of another human life, and act to end the death penalty.

You are invited to:

1. Include a petition in the Prayer of the Faithful on the Sunday prior to each execution. (See below for examples of specific and general petitions.)
2. Toll a bell (church or other) for two minutes (or display a sign) on the day/time of an execution.
3. Take action through the death penalty abolition group in your state.

Sample Specific Petition for February 22 in Florida:

For an end to the death penalty in our state, for the family of Virgie Langford and all victims of grave harm, for Melvin Trotter and all on death row, for lawyers and legal teams working to save lives, and for all prison personnel tasked with conducting executions. We pray to the Lord.

[Melvin Trotter is scheduled to be executed at the Florida State Prison on Tuesday, February 24.]

General Petition:

For an end to the death penalty (in our state), for victims of grave harm, for healing for their families, for lawyers and legal teams who work to save the lives, for all prison personnel tasked with conducting executions, and for all those on death row awaiting execution. We pray to the Lord:

Connect with your state organization working to end executions:

[Floridians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty](#)

[Oklahoma Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty](#)

[Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty](#)

[Death Penalty Alternatives for Arizona](#)

[Tennesseans for Alternatives to the Death Penalty](#)

[Ohioans to Stop Executions](#)

Read the stories of those on death row and take action to stop executions through Catholic Mobilizing Network: [Scheduled Executions](#). Thank you for joining in this life-saving work.