



## STEWARDS OF OUR EARTH All of God's Creation

Social Justice Committee, Holy Cross Parish, Mt. Airy, January 7, 2024

### *Abolish the Death Penalty in PA and End Solitary Confinement*

“The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the person is at the core of a moral vision for society. **Our belief in the sanctity of human life and the inherent dignity of the human person is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching.**” (Catholic Charities Office for Social Justice) In 2018, the Catechism of the Catholic Church was revised to state that capital punishment is inadmissible.

“In February of 2023, Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro stated what we all know. **The death penalty is fallible, and its outcome is irreversible.** He announced that he would not allow executions to take place during his time as Governor. He went further by urging lawmakers to pass legislation to abolish the death penalty once and for all in the Keystone State.

A large and diverse coalition of organizations and individuals support the bipartisan legislation introduced to make Pennsylvania the next state to abolish its death penalty. On October 31st, the Pennsylvania House Judiciary Committee passed HB 999 with a bi-partisan vote of 15-10. [HB 999 now awaits further action by the state House and would also need to be approved by the state Senate before reaching the governor’s desk.] [Click here to let your state Representative and Senator know you support HB 999 and SB 600, the bills to end executions in Pennsylvania.](#)” (Death Penalty Action, 12/11/23)

*“There is no fitting punishment without hope! Punishment for its own sake, without room for hope, is a form of torture, not of punishment.”* (Pope Francis Message to 6th World Congress Against the Death Penalty, June 22, 2016)

You can also act on another issue with consequences for human dignity by calling for the House of Representatives to [pass the End Solitary Confinement Act \(H.R. 4972\)](#) which **prohibits the use of solitary confinement as punishment in federal prisons and immigrant detention facilities.**

“Solitary confinement is the common term for the practice of isolating individuals in a prison cell for 22 to 24 hours per day. The practice also goes by the terms *restrictive housing*, *special housing units*, *administrative segregation*, and *disciplinary segregation*. Proponents claim that removing certain individuals from the general population is a way of maintaining order in prisons and of protecting those individuals and others from possible violence.

**More than 122,000 people are locked in solitary confinement each day** across federal and state corrections facilities and local jails, with additional people locked in immigration detention facilities, according to a backgrounder on the bill from the National Religious Campaign Against Torture. As with other aspects of our criminal legal system, the United States is an outlier among advanced democracies in its widespread use of solitary confinement.

An overwhelming amount of research proves that solitary confinement is psychologically and physiologically damaging and has negative outcomes on the safety of people in prison and the public through increased recidivism rates.” (Mercy Justice Team, 11/16/23)

Comments on this column may be directed to the Social Justice Committee at [socialjustice@holycrossphl.org](mailto:socialjustice@holycrossphl.org).