

Important Talking Points Regarding Federal Executions



The Catholic Call to Abolish the Death Penalty

- **The death penalty is unacceptable in all circumstances because it offends the dignity of human life.** All life is valuable and each of us has been created in the image and likeness of God. People do not lose their humanity, even after the commission of a serious crime.
- As the Catholic tradition teaches, "the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person" (Catholic Catechism 2267).
- It is not up to us to take away another person's opportunity for redemption. There are other ways to keep society safe.
- For many victims' families, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, taking another life would not help with healing nor would it honor the life of a lost loved one.

Reinstatement of Federal Executions is Out of Step with the Rest of the Country

- **The American public is turning away from the death penalty.** In October 2018, a record low 49% of Americans said they believed the punishment was applied fairly. This long, downward trend in public support reflects the major legislative and judicial wins across the country.
- In the last year and a half, two new states (Washington and New Hampshire) abolished the death penalty. All the while, rates of executions and death sentences continue to fall, including in high-use states like Texas.

Background on Federal Death Row

- **The federal death penalty is not a "national" punishment applied equally throughout the country. It is geographically concentrated.** Federal death sentences are regional in nature. Just three states – Virginia, Texas, and Missouri – are responsible for nearly half of all current federal death sentences.
- Only one person is on federal death row for a terrorism crime, and none for espionage or treason or any other offense generally considered a federal capital crime. Every single individual on federal death row could have been prosecuted in state court; some of them already had been.

Important Talking Points Regarding Federal Executions (cont.)



The Federal Death Penalty is Riddled with the Same Issues Found at the State Level

- **The federal death penalty reflects the same racial bias that is widely acknowledged as a problem in state death penalty systems.** 34 out of 61 people on the federal row are people of color, including 25 black men. There are people of color on the federal death row who were convicted and sentenced by all-white juries. The same three states that return the most federal death sentences also disproportionately condemn people of color.
- **The people on federal death row are not “the worst of the worst.** They are vulnerable people who grew up in exceptionally adverse circumstances, experiencing poverty, abandonment, neglect, physical and sexual abuse, or pervasive family and neighborhood violence. Despite the prohibition on their execution, there are nevertheless prisoners on federal death row who are intellectually disabled. A number are mentally ill or suffer from brain damage.