

4

Human Rights Day
12/10/23

Death Penalty Prayer Vigil **For lamenting racism and systems of oppression**

**Written by Sister Mary Wendeln CPPS
and Jen Morin-Williamson**

Heavenly Father/Mother,

We come before you in humility, acknowledging our role in a system that creates marginalized individuals, perpetuates racism and classism, and places people on death row. We recognize that we are part of this broken system.

We beg for your forgiveness.

We're reminded of the Precious Blood spirituality, which encourages us to walk alongside those who are on the fringes, just as Jesus did. When Jesus said, "take and eat this in memory of me" during the Eucharist, it was a call to action, not just words of worship.

Help us be determined to put those words into action, to truly stand by those who seem invisible in our fragmented world.

Racism and classism are huge factors in why some end up on death row. Bias, violence, and a flawed system have led to a cycle of crime and punishment. We lament the fact that when individuals living in poverty are accused of crimes, the cost of bail exceeds their ability to pay so they are kept in jail far longer than others with financial resources.

This imbalance continues as their legal defense team is overwhelmed with their caseload and they receive subpar counseling. Too often, this leads to a cycle of incarceration.

We pray for a change for those whose legal rights are neglected.

Since 1976, 193 people have been exonerated from death row, including 11 from Ohio. We lift up those who have risen above the system, who have fought against all odds to prove their innocence. Shine a light on the injustice that those on the outside may not see, and to see the potential for change within the system.

Give strength to those who may feel unworthy or fear harming their families as they use their power to fight for justice.

Lord, we passionately pray for an end to the death penalty in Ohio.

We yearn for a world where every life is valued, regardless of their background or circumstances.

May we live the Gospel value of peace and nonviolence, working to change this broken system and bring about a more just and compassionate world.

In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.