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Human Rights Day
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Death Penalty Prayer Vigil For Forgiveness and Reconciliation

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Loving God, so merciful and forgiving, You, our Creator, have given life to all creation and to each human person. Your generosity for this free and abundant gift overwhelms me over and over again. How can we thank you! We, the human person, are made in Your image and likeness. Imagine! To your image and likeness!! Loving God, our hearts are full of gratitude! To respond we want to respect each person as that! We want all peoples, all cultures, all countries to respect and accept each other as brothers and sisters, created in Your image and likeness. How then can we accept death penalty for anyone?

May our gratitude move us to recognize you in all creation as an extension of You. But we have failed since the time of Adam and Eve, choosing a lesser good than You. But at that time you promised to send us a Savior, Your Own Son, to reconcile us, humankind, with you and with one another and show us how to love. You did not condemn to death but gave them a second chance.

We thank you, Loving God, for this great gift of Your Son Jesus, born like one of us and living among us, showing us how to endure being born in a stable, being searched for and fleeing your own country, for suffering ridicule for the good that you did for others.

Jesus, you lived what you taught, that is to “love God above all things and to love our neighbor as ourselves.” You did this to the very end of your life, that is reconciling and being reconciliation for us, showing us how to live.

You carried the cross and let others help you and support you on this painful, sorrowful journey. How many of us have fallen away from loving one another? You ask us to walk with the victims, to walk with those who failed, with those who are on death row. You ask us to be agents of reconciliation between people and systems. Come, loving Savior, be with us on this journey of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Jesus, you were crucified for being innocent. You were judged. You were pierced with nails and a sword. You were innocent but received the death penalty. Died for us!! You were thinking of us. You also thought of the soldiers who were doing their duty. You did not condemn them, you did not respond with violence, but you prayed, “Forgive them for they do not know what they are doing” Loving Redeemer, give us a heart ready to forgive even those who are guilty so that we can be reconciled again with one another.

Loving Savior, we see the tragedy of hate every day in our homes, our governments, our streets and courtrooms as well as between townspeople and countries. Take from our hearts this desire to punish in the same way as others have treated us/others. Open our hearts to forgive, give others another chance, to be companions, bringing reconciliation to our homes, streets, cities and countries. Loving Jesus, come, forgive us and keep us from wanting the death penalty for others.

Loving God, You also gave us Our Lady of Guadalupe in Tepeyac to show us the way. She appeared to Juan Diego, letting him know that the indigenous people were loved by You at the time their human rights were taken from them by the conquerors. Mother Mary, Our Lady of Guadalupe open our hearts to be with people who are different from us and who need our healing, reconciling presence especially those suffering the death penalty because of their color, origin or background. Accompany us, Mother Mary, strengthen us, show us the way to other Tepeyac's and Juan Diego's, places and people struggling against violence, discrimination, domination and injustice. All life is precious; show us the way that no life be taken from anyone, especially with the death penalty!

St Peter says “... love your brothers and sisters, have compassion and be self-effacing. Never pay back one wrong with another, or an angry word with one another. Instead, pay back with a blessing. This is what you are called to do, so that you inherit a blessing yourself.” (1 Pet 3:8-9)

Loving and merciful God, may we become persons of forgiveness and reconciliation, a blessing, that rejection of people's rights and the death penalty be taken from our hearts, we ask this through Jesus Christ our Savior and Mother Mary of Guadalupe. Amen.