

Dear Attorney General Barr,

On the occasion of the National Catholic Prayer Breakfast, we write as fellow Catholics to express our sorrow and concern regarding your cooperation with this Administration's many policies and actions that are at odds with our faith's teachings. Of particular concern to us is your leading role in reinstating the federal death penalty.

For you to accept an honor for faithfulness to Christ, the Christifideles Laici Award, on a day sandwiched between two federal executions that you arranged is utterly shocking and an affront to our faith.

We appeal to you as our brother in Christ to decline the National Catholic Prayer Breakfast's award. Most importantly, we prayerfully call on you to reverse your Department's support of the federal death penalty. Respect the dignity of life.

We are Catholic priests, sisters, brothers, theologians and advocates who believe that Catholics in public life are morally obliged to bear witness to the full message of the Church's teachings. We recognize that in the United States neither party reflects the fullness of our Church's teachings, but partisanship cannot excuse formal and material support for policies so contrary to our faith.

When Pope John Paul II visited the United States in 1999, he described capital punishment as "both cruel and unnecessary." When Pope Francis addressed Congress in 2015, he insisted that "every life is sacred."

As you well know, our Catholic faith teaches that executions are an attack on human dignity that perpetuate a culture of violence. Recognizing the immorality of the death penalty, our Catechism states that it is "inadmissible" for faithful Catholics to condone or to participate in executions.

Mr. Attorney General, we sincerely pray that you experience an awakening of conscience about the sanctity of all life. Power and influence should be used to serve those who have been excluded, those who suffer on the peripheries. We call on you to apply the rule of law with an integrity informed by genuine faithfulness to Christ.

Sincerely,

Over 200 Catholic priests, sisters, theologians, and lay leaders from across the country