



# Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet

St. Paul Province

September 10, 2020

## Rescind the National Catholic Prayer Breakfast's Award for Attorney General Barr. An Open Letter

Dear Archbishop Gomez, Archbishop Hebda, Bishop Barron & US Catholic Conference of Bishops:

We are impelled to respond boldly in speaking out against the decision of the organizers of the September 23, 2020 National Catholic Prayer Breakfast's to extend the Christifidelis Laici Catholic Award to Attorney General Barr for his "exemplary Christ-like" behavior. "With respect to the difficulties inherent in capital punishment,"<sup>1</sup> we are acutely aware that federal executions have resumed with five recent executions (and two awaiting executions) under the sole direction of A.G. Barr is a stark contradiction to the way of mercy and forgiveness of Jesus' own life and the Teachings of the Church.

Furthermore, we are concerned that Bishop Robert Barron's presence as the keynote speaker at this National Catholic Prayer Breakfast does not support "[Church] teaching [that] also compels us as Catholics to oppose.... the use of the death penalty."<sup>2</sup> In 2018, the Vatican announced that it had formally changed the official Catechism of the Catholic Church on the death penalty in which Pope Francis called it an attack on the dignity of the person and deemed capital punishment "inadmissible" in all cases. Similarly, the USCCB for decades has been clear in acknowledging that we should not expect simple or easy solutions or rely on capital punishment to provide such a solution especially since the values of highest importance are "respect for the sanctity of human life, the protection of human life..."<sup>3</sup> As a community of women religious committed to the peace, non-violence and upholding the sanctity of all life we, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, St. Paul Province have long ministered to our incarcerated sisters and brothers including letter writing to those on death row. The heart of our CSJ mission is our charism calling us to pursue unifying love in this world.

We ask the National Catholic Prayer Breakfast organizers to rescind the invitation for this award and you, as our Catholic Bishops, to continue the critical work of the Church in supporting all efforts to end government-sanctioned killings, including federal executions, to ensure mercy is extended to all prisoners, and to uphold the sanctity of all life. As bishops, you have clearly inspired all faithful citizens to see the use of the death penalty as a serious moral issue that "challenge our consciences and requires us to act."<sup>4</sup> We challenge you as bishops to boldly act by not supporting this year's National Catholic Prayer Breakfast with the awarding of the Christifidelis Laici to A.G. Barr.

Sincerely,

*Suzanne Herder, CSJ*

Suzanne Herder, CSJ

*Cathy Steffens, CSJ*

Cathy Steffens, CSJ

*Susan Hames, CSJ*

Susan Hames, CSJ

The Leadership Team of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet

along with the Justice Commission of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet and Consociates,  
and with those who support this position. See below:

<sup>1</sup> [Statement on Capital Punishment](#), U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1980, #3.

<sup>2</sup> [The Challenges of Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship](#), USCCB, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> [Statement on Capital Punishment](#), U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1980.

<sup>4</sup> [The Challenges of Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship](#), USCCB, 2020

The Open Letter from the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, St. Paul Province, asking to **Rescind the National Catholic Prayer Breakfast's Award for Attorney General Barr** is specifically endorsed individually by the following Sisters, Consociates, and our partners in mission:

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