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CNS documentary service

Death Penalty Should Be Abolished

Bishops of Texas

The Catholic bishops of Texas called for the abolition of the death penalty, denouncing its effects not only on victims and others immediately affected, but also on society. "Capital punishment vitiates our hearts' capacity for mercy and love," the bishops said in a statement released by the Texas Catholic Conference Oct. 10. "The death penalty not only does not correspond to the common good, it actually does great harm to it." The statement, released on the World Day Against the Death Penalty, comes at a time when support for the death penalty among Americans — including Texans — is declining. Survey results released Sept. 29 by the

"The death penalty does not fulfill justice nor does it console the inconsolable."

Pew Research Center showed that Americans' support for death penalty is the lowest it has been in more than four decades. It said only 49 percent of Americans currently favor the death penalty for people convicted of murder. That's a drop from 56 percent who said in March 2015 that they supported it. The bishops' statement served as their annual address to Texas Catholics during Respect Life Month, observed by the U.S. Catholic Church every October. The month offers Catholics an opportunity to "reflect on the precious gift of life and recommit ourselves to working toward a culture that truly welcomes and protects human life in our society," the Texas bishops wrote. Texas has the highest rate of executions of any state. This year the state will carry out its lowest number of executions since 1996. The bishops' statement follows.

Each year during October the church observes Respect Life Month. During this time, we pray and reflect on the precious gift of life and recommit ourselves to working toward a culture that truly welcomes and protects human life in our society from conception to natural death. Catholic teaching on abortion and euthanasia is very clear, as is our commitment to the ongoing work of improving living conditions, education and health care access for all, especially the poor and those without resources.

This year we bishops draw particular attention to our consistent call for the abolition of the death penalty in Texas, as we

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