

How can St. Patrick and St. Malachi parishioners help incarcerated & formerly incarcerated people and their families?

PRAY

Every First Friday, join Catholic Mobilizing Network in a virtual prayer vigil for an end to the death penalty. RSVP at catholicsmobilizing.org/firstfriday-vigils.

LEARN

- In February 2022, PBS will air “Apart”, a documentary focused on three Cleveland moms rebuilding their lives after prison, with the help of an innovative reentry program organized by Lutheran Metropolitan Ministries. Visit pbs.org/independentlens/documentaries/apart/.
- For a more intimate view on prison life in the Cleveland Diocese, watch the 8-minute video at: tinyurl.com/j45yx8sn

ADVOCATE

The Diocesan Social Action Office provides action alerts on restorative justice, abolition of the death penalty, and other issues affecting current and former prisoners. Sign up for their weekly updates at: ccdacle.org/service-areas/diocesan-social-action-office

VOLUNTEER & SUPPORT

- COVID-19 has temporarily created barriers to prison ministry at the Cuyahoga County Jail, but Sr. Rita Mary Harwood is preparing for the restart as soon as conditions permit. Do you have a skill to share that could help someone make a new start? Besides leaders for Bible study and prayer groups, help is also needed in GED tutoring, yoga, writing workshops, and other areas. Contact JudyLiederbach, [216-696-6525](tel:216-696-6525) x3500.
- LEAF (Listening, Encouraging and Assisting Families of the incarcerated) is a network of family and friends supporting each other while a loved one is incarcerated. Through their website and meetings families will find non-judgmental fellowship, answers and resources to address their current difficulties. www.leafministry.org

DONATE

Diocesan Ministry to the Incarcerated is also in need of many items. Call [216-696-6525](tel:216-696-6525) x3500 for more details.

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| • Christmas cards | • Postage stamps |
| • Coats – new or gently used and clean | • Bus passes – single-use |
| • Hygiene items – especially travel-size | • Fast food gift cards |
| • Paperback books – novels, history, memoirs, inspirational | |
| • Fabric remnants – Men at the Grafton Correction Institution will sew duffle bags for the homeless as well as walker totes, phone carriers and other useful items for residents at the St. Augustine Health Campus. | |

DISCUSS

Any parishioner who would like to share their own questions, concerns or ideas about incarceration and its outcomes is invited to contact us:

Laura Fratus – laura@fratus.com

Maria Smith, attorney, Legal Aid Society of Cleveland - MASmith@lasclev.org

St. Patrick Parish
www.stpatrickbridge.org

St. Malachi Parish
www.stmalachi.org

RESPECT LIFE

The dignity of our incarcerated
brothers and sisters



St. Patrick & St. Malachi Parishes
Cleveland's Near West Side

Personal Reflection
By Laura Fratus, Parishioner, St. Patrick



My friend harvests his meal tray for prison cell gardening supplies, building compost from shredded paper and bread crumbs and germinating tomato seeds in the filtered light of a narrow slit window.

My brother wasn't always a previously incarcerated person. Once, long ago, he was a teenage boy who spent his small earnings trying to win a prize at the county fair - a stuffed dog to delight his hospitalized little sister.

My friend didn't always live on federal death row. He used to live out in the country, canoeing, and fishing, and helping his friends paint their houses.

The guy who used to help us with odd jobs didn't always commit violent crimes. There were long stretches in between the bouts with illness and drugs when he looked out for his community. Believe it or not, he once received a good citizenship award for helping to save a man from a burning building.

Many people are imprisoned for good, sound reasons. But that is not, of course, the beginning or end of their story. Our faith teaches us that there is always, until our dying breath, the chance for redemption.

About 2.3 million people are in jail in the US. Imagine the entire population of the Cleveland-Elyria metro area behind bars. Some have spent decades in prison for nonviolent crimes. A disproportionate number are persons of color, held for long sentences while people with similar conviction histories but who are white are released on probation.

And a few -a precious, unforgettable few- are innocent of the crime for which they're being punished. Just this year, two people have been exonerated and released from Ohio's over-populated death row.

What are we as faithful disciples called to do about this? I think the best example of what we should do is provided by another friend, who is serving a sentence of 21 years-to-life.

- **We must take responsibility.** The sins of our justice system belong to us all.
- **We must ask God to fix what we've broken.**
- **We must accept the help God offers.**

In my friend's case, that help has come to her in the form of worthy labor, and pen pals, and faith. For us, one tool might be at our fingertips: We can call or write to our state representatives and urge them to join the growing, bipartisan movement to abolish the death penalty, reexamine disparities in sentencing, and reduce the unnecessary incarceration of people who can show that they can have a successful reentry.

We can change this story. We can write a better chapter. God will help us.

Church Statements & Catechism

'And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.' Matthew 25: 39-40

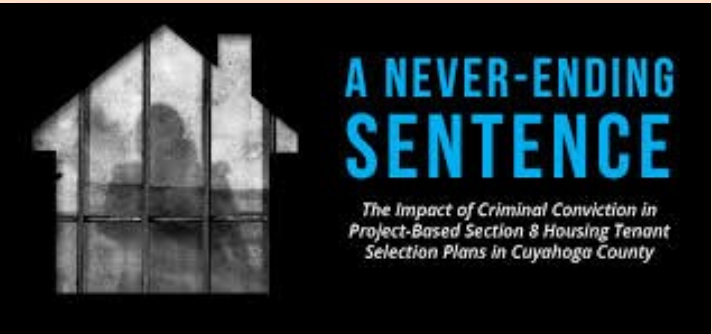


The Church teaches, in the light of the Gospel, that “the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person”, and she works with determination for its abolition worldwide.”

Recourse to the death penalty on the part of legitimate authority, following a fair trial, was long considered an appropriate response to the gravity of certain crimes and an acceptable, albeit extreme, means of safeguarding the common good.

Today, however, there is an increasing awareness that the dignity of the person is not lost even after the commission of very serious crimes. In addition, a new understanding has emerged of the significance of penal sanctions imposed by the state. Lastly, more effective systems of detention have been developed, which ensure the due protection of citizens but, at the same time, do not definitively deprive the guilty of the possibility of redemption.

- Catechism of the Catholic Church no. 2267



Even after a sentence has been completely served, a criminal conviction can follow men and women and continue to have a negative impact on trying to rebuild their lives after release. For a deeper look at the local effects of conviction on access to housing, visit <https://tinyurl.com/cuyzuehn> .