

**REMARKS OF THE MOST REVEREND CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CATHOLIC MOBILIZING NETWORK
APOSTOLIC NUNCIATURE, WASHINGTON, DC
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2019**

As the Apostolic Nuncio, the representative of the Holy Father to this country, I want to express the spiritual closeness and paternal affection of Pope Francis to the members of the Catholic Mobilizing Network and to all who support them with their prayers and sacrifices. I thank Krisanne Vaillancourt for the opportunity to say a prayer and to offer a few remarks.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Almighty and Eternal God, Author of Life, we give you praise and thanks for this day which you have created, a day dedicated as the World Day Against the Death Penalty. We thank you for the gift of life which you have given to each and every person who dwells upon the earth. We thank you for your Son, Jesus, who took on human flesh and who suffered on the Cross out of love for us. We thank you for your Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who continues to animate the hearts of your faithful, which you gather as your Church.

Pour out your Spirit of Blessing upon all gathered here this evening and upon the Catholic Mobilizing Network. May its efforts, by the power of your Holy Spirit to convert hearts and minds, bear fruit in building a culture of life, in which each and every member of the human family is loved, respected and cherished and in which even those who have sinned may experience your closeness and the healing balm of your Divine Mercy. We ask this and all things through Christ our Lord.

I also want to welcome you to the Apostolic Nunciature, the House of the Pope. Certainly, the Holy Father is very supportive of your work, and it is fitting that you gather here as you celebrate this anniversary in the life of your organization. It is fitting because the Holy Father has given us a living witness of how to show respect for the dignity of each person, including those who are incarcerated and on death row. He has offered us example by visiting prisons, washing the feet of prisoners. Hopefully, his message of mercy and inclusion is also offering you encouragement and strength to carry out your important ministry of working to abolish the death penalty and working for restorative justice.

In August 2018, as you know, Pope Francis revised the Catechism of the Catholic Church, because “a new understanding has emerged of the significance of penal sanctions imposed by the state.” Therefore, he modified the Catechism to read that “the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person.”

The Catechism (2267) continues to say that the Church “works with determination for its abolition worldwide.” The Catholic Mobilizing Network, now celebrating its 10th anniversary, is a vital part of those worldwide efforts by the Church. Although not every person on death row is spared and although every

effort to abolish the death penalty is successful, you must press on, changing the culture each day so that it becomes more and more pro-life. Your efforts are integral to building a culture of life.

This culture of life is deeply connected with the culture of hope. Just one month ago, Pope Francis even spoke against life sentences, because neither they nor capital punishment offer any hope. He said:

“It is up to every society ... to ensure that the penalty does not compromise the right to hope, that prospects for reconciliation and reintegration are guaranteed. ... Because if hope is closed in a cell, there is no future for society. Never deprive one of the right to start over.” (Audience with the Penitentiary Police and staff of the Prison and Juvenile and Community Justice Administration, 14 September 2019)

As you, the Catholic Mobilizing Network, celebrate your 10th anniversary, I would simply say – Don’t Give Up! Keep going! Be bold! Together, we can build a Culture of Life and a Civilization of Love.

Thank you for all you do. May God bless you.