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Pope Francis greets people joining him for the recitation of the Angelus prayer in St. Peter's S

Pope Francis greets people joining him for the recitation of the Angelus prayer in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Dec. 1, 2024. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)



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Rome — December 8, 2024
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Pope Francis on Dec. 8 made a special appeal for the lives of death row inmates in the United States to be spared.

"Let us pray for their sentence to be commuted, changed," said the pope. "Let us think of these brothers and sisters of ours and ask the Lord to save them from death."

The pope's remarks come at a critical time when American Catholic leaders are pushing U.S. President Joe Biden to commute the sentences of the 40 inmates currently on death row.

The Catholic Mobilizing Network, a leading advocacy group opposing capital punishment, has appealed directly to the Biden administration to use his remaining time in office to take immediate action before President Donald Trump returns to

office next month.

During his first term, Trump reinstated federal executions, including a surge of 13 executions over a six-month period.

"Trump has a sordid history with executions," said Catholic Mobilizing Network's executive director Krisanne Vaillancourt Murphy in an earlier interview with the National Catholic Reporter. "Now is not the time to step back from death penalty abolition."

The pope's remarks came during his weekly Sunday Angelus prayer delivered from the window of the Vatican's Apostolic Palace. He asked the faithful gathered there and listening in from around the world to join him in prayer that death row inmates receive mercy.

In 2018, Francis updated the official Catechism of the Catholic Church to declare the death penalty to be "inadmissible."

"The death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person," states the new language, which commits the Catholic Church toward its global abolition.

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