



End the Torture of Solitary Confinement in NY

The isolation we've experienced because of the pandemic takes an emotional toll, but imagine being completely isolated from all human contact for 22 to 24 hours a day and confined to a tiny room. This is the reality of thousands of New Yorkers held in solitary confinement in prisons and jails around our state. The New York State Catholic Conference joins many other organizations in opposing the overuse of solitary confinement, [saying](#):

"Incarcerated people do not surrender their human dignity when the prison doors close behind them. People in isolated confinement are locked in cells 22 to 24 hours per day, with no limits on how long they can be held there. They are denied meaningful human contact, health care and opportunities for religious services. The deprivation, lack of normal human interaction, and extreme idleness fundamentally alter the brain and can cause immense psychological suffering, self-harm, and often lead to suicide. Issues with which people enter segregated confinement — mental illness, addiction, anger, despair — are only exacerbated by extreme isolation. Additionally, a disproportionate number of those in solitary confinement are people of color.

Solitary confinement works against the purpose of improving public safety, both inside our prisons and jails and in our communities. For all Americans committed to building a safer, healthier society, we cannot ignore the mental illness, debilitating trauma and recidivism that are the hallmarks of placing inmates in segregated confinement.

"Being in solitary is like sitting in your bathroom for almost 24 hours a day for years straight. You are stuck here. You start hearing voices and you argue more easily. You go crazy like an animal in a cage.... I often feel extremely enclosed, as if the walls are closing in on me, suffocating me." —Anonymous, Solitary at Southport Correctional Association of NY

THE WALLS ARE CLOSING IN ON ME
Suicide and Self-Harm in New York
State's Solitary Confinement Units,
2015-2019

Add your voice, ask your state legislator to support the **Humane Alternatives to Long-Term (HALT) Solitary Confinement bill (S2836 / A2277)**. **Sign the petition [here](#)** and then **call your legislators: State Senate switchboard:(518) 455-2800 State Assembly switchboard: (518) 455-4100**

The operators can look up and connect you to your elected officials' offices.

"One form of torture is the one sometimes applied through confinement in high security prisons. With the pretext of offering greater security to society or special treatment for certain categories of prisoners, its main characteristic is none other than external isolation. As shown by studies carried out by various human rights organizations, the lack of sensory stimuli, the total impossibility of communication and the lack of contact with other human beings induce mental and physical suffering such as paranoia, anxiety, depression, weight loss, and significantly increase the suicidal tendency." -Pope Francis
[Address to the Delegates of the International Association of Penal Law, 23 October 2014](#)

Save the Date: *Annual Diocesan Social Ministry Conference* *Thursday May 6*

*There's Still So Much We Can Do,
Even During Social Distancing,
To Build Up Christ's Reign of Justice & Peace!*



Are your parish's social ministry efforts lagging due to the pandemic? Could you use an energy boost to re-ignite your passion for the social justice work of the Church? Then **save the morning of May 6** and plan to attend our annual diocesan social ministry conference.

We have to "go virtual" with this year's annual conference, so it will happen over Zoom. That means you don't have to travel to attend! But you'll still have the opportunity to dialogue with others engaged in parish social ministry. And you'll see some great ways to make your own Zoom events more interesting and inter-active. We've already lined up speakers from a variety of Catholic organizations and workshops on a range of issues within Catholic Social Teaching. Please plan to join in!

*This
Fish Is
Rotten!*



The Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking continues to call on Catholics to stand up for the people who have been duped into slavery in the fishing industry. These workers endure life-threatening working conditions, beatings and near starvation.

Please sign the [online petition](#) to SYSCO, an enormous distributor of food products, asking the company to make public its efforts to ensure that its seafood products are not harvested by slave labor.



JOURNEY THROUGH LENT WITH CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

Please remember to contribute to your Catholic Relief Services Rice Bowl throughout Lent. Take a listen to this inspiring video www.crsricebowl.org/almsgiving for a reflection on how, through our Lenten almsgiving, we're living out the parable of the Good Samaritan, with CRS as the "innkeeper" to whom we entrust those who are hurting.

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