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California Catholic Bishops Welcome Death Penalty Moratorium

San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone, in whose Archdiocese the death chamber is located, has issued the following statement on behalf of the California Catholic Conference of Bishops regarding the declaration of a moratorium on executions by California Governor Gavin Newsom:

“The Roman Catholic Bishops of California welcome the announcement by Governor Newsom today that he is declaring a moratorium on the use of the death penalty in the state of California. We appreciate this recognition that the state has the adequate means to defend human dignity and public safety without recourse to capital punishment. We ask the Governor to urge the legislature to find a permanent legislative solution that will end the practice of capital punishment in our state for good.

“We also encourage the Governor to use well the time of the moratorium to promote civil dialogue on alternatives to the death penalty, including giving more needed attention and care to the victims of violence and their families. Capital punishment is not a cure for the suffering and turmoil inflicted by violent crime; the restorative healing of victims and their families to the extent possible is an essential part of justice.

“With regard to the practice of capital punishment itself, it has been apparent for many years that such recourse to the ultimate punishment is not necessary in a modern society. Repeated studies have proven that it does not serve as a deterrent, that too many innocent people are condemned, and that sentencing is too often influenced by racial, economic and other discriminatory factors.

“The Catholic Church has long recognized these realities, beginning with Saint Pope John Paul II and continuing with Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and Pope Francis. They have been joined by numerous national conferences of bishops, including our own U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and other Catholic leaders throughout the world. Pope Francis in particular has modified the Catechism of the Catholic Church to assert that the death penalty is “inadmissible” in order to underscore that it undermines the respect for life demanded by the intrinsic dignity of every human life.

“We thank Governor Newsom for this decision, and pray that this moratorium will bear fruit for a more just and equitable solution to addressing the violence that plagues our society.”

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