Texas Catholic bishops urge death penalty’s end

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Texas Roman Catholic bishops issued a letter Monday calling for an end to the death penalty, saying the practice harms society, is financially wasteful and disproportionately punishes minorities, the poor and people with mental disabilities.

There also is evidence that innocent people have been “killed by the government on our behalf,” said the statement by the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops, who added that capital punishment feeds the “false belief that violence is the only remedy for violence.”

“The death penalty negatively influences our children’s moral formation and our culture as it fails to allow for mercy and redemption,” the bishops wrote. “In our country and in the state of Texas, the death penalty not only does not correspond to the common good, it actually does great harm to it.”
The statement, which did not break new ground in Catholic teaching, was released on the World Day Against the Death Penalty and serves as the bishops’ address to Texas Catholics during the annual October observance of Respect Life Month.

“Our call to abolish the death penalty is not a call to deny justice,” the bishops wrote. “On the contrary, it is a call to the whole community to recognize that the death penalty does not fulfill justice, nor does it console the inconsolable.”

The bishops also will work during the 2017 session of the Texas Legislature, which begins in January, to reform state death penalty laws, said Jennifer Carr Allmon, executive director of the conference.

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