



Archdiocese of Newark
OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

July 9, 2020

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

I write to you on behalf of Dustin Lee Honken, a prisoner at the United States Penitentiary (UPS), Terre Haute, Indiana. Mr. Honken has been condemned to death for the murder of five people, including two children. He has exhausted all legal recourses and is scheduled to be executed on July 17, 2020. He pleads for clemency and I ask you respectfully to grant his petition.

I have known Mr. Honken for seven years. During my service as the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Indianapolis (2012-17), I visited him and other condemned prisoners at UPS 4-5 times each year. If his death sentence is commuted, Mr. Honken expects to spend his remaining days in prison. His present spiritual guide, Father Mark O'Keefe, OSB, confirms that the spiritual growth in faith and compassion, which I had witnessed in our meetings some years ago, continues to this day. He is serene about the future and tries to show solace for his companions on Death Row.

There is no doubt that the crimes for which he was convicted are heinous. However, killing Mr. Honken will do nothing to restore justice or heal those still burdened by these crimes. Instead, his execution will reduce the government of the United States to the level of a murderer and serve to perpetuate a climate of violence which brutalizes our society in so many ways. By commuting this death sentence, you would help stem the tide of anger and revenge that threatens our country.

As you know, its use of capital punishment makes the United States an outlier in the world. Pope Francis has asked our country to end its use of the death penalty and recently clarified the teaching of the Catholic Church regarding the use of the death penalty. The official *Catechism of the Catholic Church* declares ... "the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person", and [the Church] works with determination for its abolition worldwide" (n. 2267).

You are in my prayers as you consider this request. May the Lord of the Universe guide you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,


Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.
Archbishop of Newark

