

Sister Eileen Working to End Executions in the U.S.

Sister Eileen Reilly began a new ministry as Religious Engagement Associate with Catholic Mobilizing Network (CMN) in July. Her work with the CMN, which began 10 years ago, is focused on broadening and deepening the involvement of women religious towards eliminating the death penalty in the United States. Federal executions resumed under the Trump Administration, having had 10 executions since July, is just astounding and the issue has become even more urgent.

Sister Eileen, who recently completed her long tenure at the U.N., grew up in Massachusetts where executions had long been outlawed, had moved to Virginia where the number of executions conducted in the state were staggering and became an important issue in her ministry. She later moved to Connecticut where she began lobbying for the end of the death penalty during the time of the serial rapist and murderer Michael Ross. At the time, Connecticut hadn't executed anyone in 40 years and his execution in May 2005 was the state's last conducted until it was outlawed in 2012. During the time before his death he reached out to Sister Eileen and she met and visited with him during the last six months of his life.

Sister Eileen said that during her time with Michael she always remembered the quote: "We're all more than the worst thing we've ever done." She said that she truly saw the human side of the man during one visit when she wore a white bracelet and he was very concerned that she had been in the hospital.

Sister Eileen said that in her work she hopes to reach the many active Sisters in the United States, commenting that the Sisters in the United States may be an aging population, but they are highly educated, highly motivated and capable of writing letters, signing petitions and reaching out to political leaders towards affecting real change.

The work of ending federal executions has become a front-and-center issue as three more executions are scheduled for the beginning of January. Prayers for these people regarding their unnecessary fate are needed now, more urgently, than ever.

