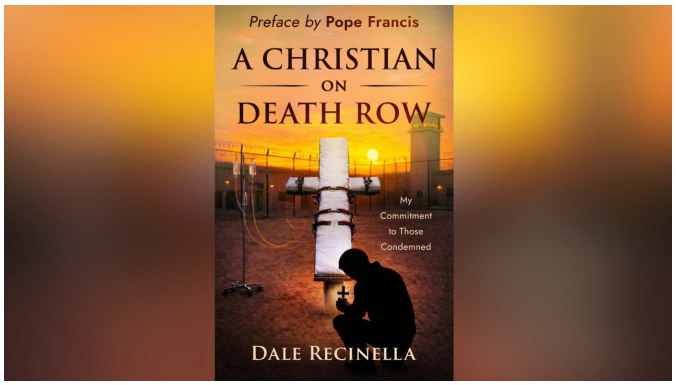
Book on death-row ministry praised by Pope Francis released in English

“A Christian on Death Row,” a book by American lay chaplain Dale Recinella recounting his ministry among prisoners condemned to death, is now available in English.



Article published by Vatican News on September 02, 2026

Pope Francis, who wrote the preface to the original Italian edition of A Christian on Death Row – My Commitment to Those Condemned, described the work as a mastercalss in God’s mercy.

Dale Recinella’s book offers a firsthand account of more than two decades of pastoral ministry on Florida’s death row. It was released in English by Incendio Presss on July 29.

The Italian edition was published by the Vatican Publishing House (LEV) in August 2024 with a preface by Pope Francis.

Mr. Recinella left behind a successful career as a financial lawyer after undergoing a profound spiritual awakening. He went on to serve for more than twenty years as a Catholic lay chaplain to prisoners awaiting execution in Florida.

In 2021, the Pontifical Academy for Life presented him with its first Guardian of Life Award in recognition of his decades of service.

Stories from death row

Drawing on real-life stories, Mr. Recinella explores the many dimensions of capital punishment and its effects on everyone drawn into its orbit: prisoners and their relatives, victims’ families, prison employees, pastoral ministers, and counsellors.

In the book’s introduction, Father Dustin Feddon, founder and executive director of Joseph House, describes these accounts as modern-day parables revealing the power of mercy over condemnation and of presence over indifference.

The book also recalls visiting prisoners as one of the corporal works of mercy—a calling rooted in Christ’s words in the Gospel of Matthew: “I was … in prison and you visited me.”

In his preface, the late Pope Francis points to Jesus’ own final moments on the Cross, when He welcomed into His embrace a man who had also been condemned to death.