

The following are statements from Catholic leaders, religious orders and organizations which condemn racism and promote active engagement toward promoting reconciliation, peace, and a rededication toward building God's kingdom in all of its rich and profound diversity.

Pope Francis

June 3, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in the United States, I have witnessed with great concern the disturbing social unrest in your nation in these past days, following the tragic death of Mr. George Floyd.

My friends, we cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in any form and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life. At the same time, we have to recognise that “the violence of recent nights is self-destructive and self-defeating. Nothing is gained by violence and so much is lost”.

Today I join the Church in Saint Paul and Minneapolis, and in the entire United States, in praying for the repose of the soul of George Floyd and of all those others who have lost their lives as a result of the sin of racism. Let us pray for the consolation of their grieving families and friends and let us implore the national reconciliation and peace for which we yearn. May Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of America, intercede for all those who work for peace and justice in your land and throughout the world.

May God bless all of you and your families.

Franciscan Brothers of Brooklyn

June 5, 2020

We, the Franciscan Brothers of Brooklyn, are deeply saddened and affected by the recent death of George Floyd and all others who

have lost their lives as a result of the sin of racism. Our hearts go out to all those affected, especially the family and friends of George Floyd. As followers of St. Francis of Assisi, faithful to the Gospel call to love, we strongly condemn any type of disrespect, racism, violence, intolerance, hate, or bigotry either in action or word. We stand in solidarity with our African American brothers and sisters who peacefully demand an end to the deadly violence of racism in our nation. We will not be indifferent when their God-given value, dignity, and worth are violated. As men of faith, we condemn the sin of systemic racism that has led to these events and we dedicate ourselves to ending racial injustice by treating all people as St. Francis would – with dignity and respect. We begin, anew, by directing our energies to greater understanding, compassion, and love for one another so that we may continue to create a world of justice and freedom.

The Order of Friars Minor – Six United States Provinces

June 3, 2020

SYSTEMIC RACISM MUST END: STATEMENT FROM THE 6 US OFM PROVINCES IN THE PROCESS OF UNION

At a time when the COVID-19 virus has disproportionately attacked people of color, we have witnessed the killing of Mr. George Floyd and the protests, sometimes violent, which have occurred in our cities in its aftermath. Our hearts go out to all affected.

Even though, following in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi, we decry violence and desire peace, we stand in solidarity with our outraged African American brothers and sisters who demand an end to the deadly violence of racism. We cannot be indifferent when their God-given dignity is violated.

As people of faith, we not only condemn the systemic racism that has led to these events, but we also re-dedicate ourselves to ending racial injustice in our Provinces, in our Church, and in our nation and creating

that space where Dr. Martin Luther King's Beloved Community will flourish.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Statement of U.S. Bishops' President on George Floyd and the Protests in American Cities

May 31, 2020

WASHINGTON – Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles and president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has issued a statement on George Floyd and the protests in American cities that have taken place over the last several days. This follows the Friday statement from seven U.S. bishop chairmen of committees within the USCCB.

Archbishop Gomez's full statement follows:

The killing of George Floyd was senseless and brutal, a sin that cries out to heaven for justice. How is it possible that in America, a black man's life can be taken from him while calls for help are not answered, and his killing is recorded as it happens?

I am praying for George Floyd and his loved ones, and on behalf of my brother bishops, I share the outrage of the black community and those who stand with them in Minneapolis, Los Angeles, and across the country. The cruelty and violence he suffered does not reflect on the majority of good men and women in law enforcement, who carry out their duties with honor. We know that. And we trust that civil authorities will investigate his killing carefully and make sure those responsible are held accountable.

We should all understand that the protests we are seeing in our cities reflect the justified frustration and anger of millions of our brothers and sisters who even today experience humiliation, indignity, and unequal opportunity only because of their race or the color of their skin. It should not be this way in America. Racism has been tolerated for far too long in our way of life.

It is true what Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, that riots are the language of the unheard. We should be doing a lot of listening right now. This time, we should not fail to hear what people are saying through their pain. We need to finally root out the racial injustice that still infects too many areas of American society.

But the violence of recent nights is self-destructive and self-defeating. Nothing is gained by violence and so much is lost. Let us keep our eyes on the prize of true and lasting change.

Legitimate protests should not be exploited by persons who have different values and agendas. Burning and looting communities, ruining the livelihoods of our neighbors, does not advance the cause of racial equality and human dignity.

We should not let it be said that George Floyd died for no reason. We should honor the sacrifice of his life by removing racism and hate from our hearts and renewing our commitment to fulfill our nation's sacred promise — to be a beloved community of life, liberty, and equality for all.

Congregation of St. Joseph

Leadership Conference of Women Religious

May 29, 2020

We, the Congregation of St. Joseph, unite our minds, hearts, prayer and action with the [Leadership Conference of Women Religious](#), in support of the following statement.

LCWR Condemns Killing of George Floyd

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious strongly condemns the police-killing of another black man on the streets of our nation. Our hearts are breaking as we mourn with the family and friends of George Floyd and with all who have lost loved ones to law enforcement violence, all who live in fear, all whose dignity is threatened. The continued killing of black men and women; the

constant harassment of people of color; and the denial of the rights and dignity of our African American neighbors must end now.

Racism is America's original sin. It is a virus every bit as deadly as COVID-19 that has infected our nation since its inception and unless and until we address it, people of color will continue to die and our nation will never heal. Racism, whether the institutional racism which privileges some at the expense others or the daily acts of hate and discrimination diminishes us all. It denies that most profound truth, that all of us are created in God's image and each of us is entitled to dignity and respect.

As women religious we acknowledge our own complicity in institutional racism; we ask forgiveness of our sisters and brothers of color; and we pray for our nation's healing, and we know that is not enough. It is time for bold, decisive action. We pledge to raise our voices and to act now to end this scourge which has cost us so dearly. It is long past time to dismantle white privilege and rededicate ourselves to building God's beloved community.

We urge Hennepin County Attorney, Mike Freeman, to pledge a just and timely adjudication of this tragedy. We call on the people of the United States to work with greater urgency to eliminate the systemic racism that infects the very soul of our nation. We ask God's blessing on the struggle that lies ahead.

Diocese of Brooklyn, Bishop DiMarzio

May 31, 2020

The Most Reverend Nicholas DiMarzio, Bishop of Brooklyn, has issued the following statement regarding this week's racially divisive events in Minneapolis and New York City that have sparked tensions in those cities and throughout the Nation, calling for our response to be peaceful in the face of the evil that is racism:

"In Minneapolis, a black man suspected of a crime was handcuffed and brutalized by a policeman, which caused his death. The same week here in New York, a woman called police on a man falsely claiming he was threatening her with harm – his only crime was being a person of color.

These instances have led to protests and violence since persons of color feel they have no recourse. We Christians must be fierce in our opposition to the evil of racism, but we must respond peacefully and remember the Lord's call to us to love one another as He loves us."

Sisters of Charity of New York

June 3, 2020

Sisters of Charity Statement on the Death of George Floyd and Racism in the United States

SCNY Pin The Sisters of Charity of New York stand in solidarity with all who are enraged and distressed by the cruel and senseless killing of George Floyd.

This action, committed in fewer than nine minutes by a professional police officer, a man entrusted to uphold the law and provide crucial assistance to the people of Minneapolis, has raised national issues of racism and uncontrolled brutality on the part of some members of law enforcement. Mr. Floyd's unheeded desperate plea, "I can't breathe," strikes a deep chord of angry indignation within us. Racism and violence are inherent in our past. It cannot be part of our present lives or our future vision.

We continue to support and promote free speech across our country. Peaceful demonstrations help us focus our energies and strengthen our resolve for change. During the past week, we have witnessed the reprehensible expansion of protests by people planning destruction and looting. Our lament cannot and should not be expressed in ways that are harmful or destructive to life and property.

As women religious, we stand with Pope Francis, who has condemned racism and street violence, and urged reconciliation. We also support the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops who ask, "How is it possible that in America, a black man's life can be taken from him while calls for help are not answered, and his killing is recorded as it happens?"

We, the Sisters of Charity of New York, are committed to the love of God and others, based on the principles of justice, truth, and respect. We consider the diversity of people in our city, our nation, and our world as the expansiveness of God's gift of creation. In our families and communities, racism must give way to awareness, respect, and gratitude, especially for people of color.

Sisters of Mercy

May 29, 2020

Mercy Responds to the Killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery & Breonna Taylor

"The ultimate measure of a [person] is not where [they] stand in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."

--Martin Luther King, Jr.

The Institute Leadership Team of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, join with the many who grieve the recent killings of:

George Floyd, 46
Minneapolis, Minnesota
Ahmaud Arbery, 25
Brunswick, Georgia
Breonna Taylor, 26
Louisville, Kentucky

We pray for comfort for each of these families as they face the painful loss of their loved ones. We pray for the African American Community, repeatedly impacted by the trauma these killings produce, that the supportive care is accessible and available. We pray for this Nation's deep racial divide and that true healing will occur.

We pray unceasingly, and we stand.

We stand in solidarity with the many calling for justice and an end to the extrajudicial killings of African Americans.

Association of Jesuit Colleges & Universities

AJCU Statement on Racial Violence

“Love of God which does not issue in justice for others is a farce.”

- Rev. Pedro Arrupe, S.J., Former Superior General of the Society of Jesus

We are all aware of the recent deaths of our fellow Americans, including Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd. Each life extinguished violently – a result of racial injustice across the country. These events are happening in the midst of the global COVID-19 pandemic, which reveals its own kind of racial injustice and inequities.

The communities that our Jesuit colleges and universities call home are not immune to the inequities of society: We must not ignore them. Our institutions have a long history of working to reconcile the Gospel vision of “all created in the image and likeness of God,” with our failure to embrace what we profess as a Christian community.

It took many of us far too many years to open our doors to the African American community members who are our neighbors. In some cases, our founders and early leaders were slaveholders. And still today, we struggle to engage and include everyone in the opportunity to fully realize how we can contribute to our shared future – together.

In these days, when the coronavirus pandemic and police violence clearly impact people of color to a disproportionate degree, we implore our campus communities not just to decry injustice and bemoan the lack of opportunity. Rather, we must all pray, listen, learn and act. We are compelled to do all that we can, to make a difference for the better, for justice and equality.

For more than 200 years, our nation's Jesuit colleges, universities, high schools and middle schools have taken the slow and deliberate path of educating students for thoughtful, moral citizenship. Our efforts have been well-intended, yet imperfect. Today, the killings of George Floyd and so many others challenge us to act against the overt and unrecognized racism that lurks in the American community and in the recesses of our own hearts. As our Jesuit mission calls us to do, let us use our collective voices as a lever for justice and the common good. We call upon our students, alumni, faculty and staff to take concrete steps to make a difference in our own institutions and in our nation.

Archbishop Bernard A. Hebna

Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis

Statement Regarding the Death of George Floyd in Minneapolis

May 27, 2020

From Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda:

The video of George Floyd in police custody Monday evening is gut wrenching and deeply disturbing. The sadness and pain are intense. Let us pray for comfort for his grieving family and friends, peace for a hurting community and prudence while the process moves forward. We need a full investigation that results in rightful accountability and veritable justice.

Particularly at this time when human fragility has been brought into focus by the Covid-19 pandemic, we are called to respect the worth and dignity of each individual, whether they be civilians in need of protection or law enforcement officers charged with providing that

protection. All human life is sacred. Please join our Catholic community in praying for George Floyd and his family, and working for that day when “love and truth will meet [and] justice and peace will kiss” (Psalm 85).

Cardinal Seán P. O’Malley, OFM Cap.

Archdiocese of Boston

Statement on the killing of George Floyd

May 30, 2020

In Boston we are physically miles away from Minneapolis. But no American city, and, really, no American citizen is separated from what we have seen this week in vivid detail. The killing of George Floyd has catalyzed reactions across the nation. It has done so because it is not a singular, isolated event.

The killing of George Floyd by a police officer in Minneapolis this week was morally wrong and must be legally prosecuted. To say this is to state the obvious, but it is worth saying because there is a powerful link between the moral and legal dimensions of the killing which has now sparked protest across the country. As a nation we entrust power, even lethal force, to our government and its representatives in law enforcement. But there are both moral and legal limits to how force can be used. If officers of the law use force in the way millions of us saw in an eight-minute video, then trust in the government, in the law and in the legal system is deeply wounded. That is why the legal prosecution, following constitutional standards, must proceed with care and urgency. The police failed the moral test in George Floyd’s case; now the court will be tested. What is morally wrong must be pursued vigorously by legal standards. That much is lucidly clear.

There is a history here, one documented over decades in print, and now in social media and on television in our homes. The history is clear and tragic: George Floyd was an African American man who died at the hands of a police officer. This is a narrative which has been

repeated often and in multiple locations across the country. The history is well documented, but it is known experientially in the African American community in a way that is not widely shared.

The wider community is aware of some cases, but the African American community lives with the experience and memories of these deaths in an entirely different way. It is a daily reality - one they must speak to their children about and live themselves with some fear.

This gap between different communities in what is one country, one civic community, is the broader reality which this week's events force any of us to reflect upon.

George Floyd's death occurred in the midst of the most catastrophic healthcare crisis in our history. We are all threatened by it. But the African American community has been impacted in numbers far beyond its size in the country. This fact in turn is related to and repeated in other issues of healthcare, employment and housing.

Responding to George Floyd's death reaches beyond one person to some of what it reminds us about in these larger realities of our nation. In responding to his death, some have used violence. I can understand the frustration but I must strongly oppose those methods. For any of us, the singular voice of Dr. Martin Luther King still rings true: "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.

Archdiocese of Newark

June 3, 2020

The people of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Newark join with Catholic dioceses across the United States as well as all people of good will in condemning the senseless and brutal murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25. We extend our deep sorrow to his family and friends, who face soul-sapping grief because of his terrible death.

We offer heartfelt prayer for the people of Minneapolis and St. Paul, expressing special solidarity with our beloved brother, Archbishop Bernard Hebda and the people he serves.

The murder of George Floyd, which is simply the latest instance of a person of color dying at the hands of those sworn to protect the community, has provoked justified anger and peaceful protest across the United States. Rage, as well as shameful exploitation of this tragedy, have spawned inexcusable violence in cities throughout this nation. As we witness the asphyxiation of our country, many of us cry in anguish: why?

How we answer the question is crucial because we will then know what to pray for and how we must act. No one comes to Jesus with the lame request of wanting to feel better. They name the evil and ask for relief. We need to turn to the Lord of the Universe, for the malice we name cannot be eradicated by our unaided efforts.

The necessity of naming the evil of racism humiliates us, since so many events in our lifetime, let alone the history of our nation, have compelled us to shamefully recognize the national sin that obliges African Americans to endure unique and relentless humiliation, indignity, and unequal opportunity. Our tolerance of racism as well as collective deafness to the cry of those so grievously offended and the conscious and unconscionable promotion of divisions in this nation has encouraged the heinous evil of racism to propagate.

Certainly, tolerance of tribalistic factions in the United States, especially in our political forum, promotes a savage law of the jungle and an immoral ethos of "might makes right". Violent rhetoric, selfishness and even the crude appropriation of religious symbols conspire to produce a malevolent miasma in which the sin of racism may flourish unchecked. Our society will make no progress in addressing the evil of racism without the will to leave behind the purveyors of polarization.

The Archdiocese of Newark must renew our commitment to making the dream of peace built on justice and racial equality a reality for all our sisters and brothers, here in northern New Jersey as well as throughout the United States. Since this is our goal, we embrace gratefully the prophetic words of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., “Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”

In great sorrow, but also with profound hope, we turn to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, and ask for her protection and care during these troubled times. This young woman sang of One whose mercy is from age to age to those who fear him...who has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart...who has thrown down the rulers from their thrones, but lifted up the lowly (Luke 1, 50-52). May she inspire us with courage to do the work of justice and to eliminate—once and for all—all hatred, bigotry and violence from our hearts, our homes and our communities.

Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory

Archdiocese of Washington

May 31, 2020

In astonishment, we are seeing the reactions of people across the United States as they express feelings of frustration, hurt, and anger in their cry for justice for George Floyd, whom we painfully watched being suffocated in front of our eyes on video in Minneapolis, Minnesota this past week.

Many of us remember similar incidents in our history that accompanied the Civil Rights Movement, where we repeatedly saw Black Americans viciously brutalized by police on television and in newspaper photos. Those historic moments helped to rouse our national conscience to the African American experience in the United States and now, in 2020, we tragically still see repeated incidents of police brutality against African Americans.

We find ourselves in this national moment again with the awakening of our conscience by heartbreaking photos and video that clearly confirm that racism still endures in our country. On television and in social media, we are observing an overflow of pain felt acutely in the African American community and shared by too many other communities.

Moments like this cause people of good will, who believe in the value, respect and dignity of every human life, to wonder if and how we can move on from here. The horror of George Floyd's death, like all acts of racism, hurts all of us in the Body of Christ since we are each made in the image and likeness of God, and deserve the dignity that comes with that existence.

This incident reveals the virus of racism among us once again even as we continue to cope with the coronavirus pandemic.

We owe immense appreciation to our first responders who are currently working tirelessly to care for us and keep us safe. We remain grateful to them for their commitment to serve our community by protecting and saving lives.

However, as a society, must find ways to understand and to respond to the pain of our brothers and sisters. We see racism destroying the lives of Jewish, Muslim, and Christian people because of their religious and ethnic heritages. Racism triggers the divisive and xenophobic attitudes of nationalism. It also targets people because of their cultural traditions or physical appearances and it threatens immigrant people who seek nothing more than the opportunity to improve their lives and the lives of their children.

We must non-violently and constructively work together to heal and build the "Beloved Community" that was spoken about by the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

On this Pentecost weekend, I join my brother bishops throughout our nation, and especially Archbishop Hebda of St. Paul and Minneapolis, in calling on the Holy Spirit in the most urgent way. We must examine

our own attitudes and actions in order to seek conversion from sin and turn our hearts towards Christ in order to end personal and structural racism. Now, and every day, we must pray to find the strength to do what is right and just as we encounter our neighbors from a culture, country, religion, race, or experience different than our own and see in them God's creative design.

This moment calls us to be the Church of hope that Jesus Christ created us to be in a world full of pain and despair.

We pray for a new Pentecost: a renewal of love, justice and truth in our hearts. We are called to do justice and love goodness in order to walk humbly with God.

Since we are confident that the Father always hears our prayer for reconciliation, together, we join in peaceful, non-violent protest, action, and prayer for the balm to cure all forms of racism starting today.

Please join me in asking Our Father for the balm of love, justice, peace, compassion and mercy to end racism and hatred now. Come, Holy Spirit, come.

Bishop Joseph N. Perry
Archdiocese of Chicago

A Reflection on George Floyd from Bishop Joseph N. Perry

What a disturbing video capture, in view of the world's eyes, of George Floyd detained by a police officer kneeling on his neck till life was crushed from him; a frightening emblem of relations white-and-black reinforced by similar atrocities embedded in memory of recent days; lest we forget other black men, young and old, grandfathers, great grandfathers, great-great grandfathers, ancestors whose necks were locked in chains during the Middle passage, then by ropes from a tree, a litany of men our brothers demeaned and emasculated. Is this the message of America towards its black citizens? Is this the

fundamental assessment of whites towards blacks? Is this the closeted attitude of a nation calling itself free towards blacks and other groups this nation throws to the sides? And, so we pray, and we pray some more, and we pray still, hoping for deliverance in this vale of tears.

Cardinal Blase J. Cupich

Archdiocese of Chicago

May 31, 2020

Statement of Cardinal Cupich on the murder of George Floyd and its aftermath

The past nights I have watched in great personal pain as the pent-up anger of our people caught fire across our country. I saw the city where I was born, the cities where I have lived, the city I pastor now, catch embers from the city where I was educated and burn. Was I horrified at the violence? Yes. Was I surprised? No.

As the saying goes, if you're not outraged, you're not paying attention. What did we expect when we learned that in Minneapolis, a city often hailed as a model of inclusivity, the price of a black life is a counterfeit twenty-dollar bill? When we added another name to the list of those murdered for being black or for caring about the marginalized?

I will not pretend to speak with any authority about the challenges people of color experience in our society. I do not share the fear they put on when they and their children leave their homes every day. I do not know what it means to be "other." But I know there is a way to fix it. And the fix begins when we stop talking about the proportionality of "their" response and start talking about the proportionality of "ours." Surely a nation that could put a man in space, his safety assured by the brilliance of black women, can create a fair legal system, equitable education and employment opportunities and ready access to health care. Laws do not solve problems, but they

create a system where racism in all its forms is punished and playing fields are leveled.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been called a great equalizer. It has been even more a great revealer of societal cancers as deadly as the virus. As others have pointed out, health insecurity kills, and poverty is poison. We can and must make a society that views the soaring of a child's potential with more joy than the soaring of a rocket.

I stand ready to join religious, civic, labor and business leaders in coming together to launch a new effort to bring about recovery and reconciliation in our city. We do not need a study of the causes and effects. Those answers can be found on the shelves of government offices and academic institutions across our burning nation. No, we need to take up the hard work of healing the deep wound that has afflicted our people since the first slave ships docked on this continent. And we need to start today.

National Black Sisters Conference

21st Century Lynchings in America: Our Red Record Statement issued by The National Black Sisters' Conference NBSC

In 1895 the activist and Civil Rights icon, Ida B. Wells, wrote a research pamphlet called *The Red Record*. In it Mrs. Wells tabulated the numbers of lynchings in the United States since the Emancipation of African slaves. The conclusion was that little had changed for the Negro in America by the end of the nineteenth century. The Emancipation Proclamation, and federal programs like the Freedmen's Bureau, did not prevent the death of thousands of Negroes by the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Ida B. Wells writes: "in slave times the Negro was kept subservient and submissive... but with freedom the Negro is whipped, scourged, he is killed." Fredrick Douglass, in a review of Mrs. Wells' groundbreaking study, wrote: "If American moral sensibility was not hardened by the persistent infliction of outrage and crime against colored people, a

scream of horror, shame, and indignation would rise from heaven.” America’s sensibility is still hardened in the twenty-first century. Black Americans still scream in horror. We still cannot breathe. Black Lives still do not Matter.

One-hundred and twenty-four years later we are still writing the same story! African American men, women, and children are still being lynched, murdered, and executed for playing with a toy gun, watching television in one’s own home, and mistaken identity, driving or jogging while black, and being choked to death in cold blood by law enforcement officers, who have sworn to serve and protect.

We must speak and never forget their names.

Reason “Sean” Reed shot and killed in Indianapolis; Breonna Taylor, an emergency medical technician in Louisville, Ky., shot eight times in her bed; Amad Aubrey killed while out jogging; and George Floyd dying from a police officer’s knee on his neck as Mr. Floyd screamed, “I can’t breathe!”

The National Black Sisters’ Conference (NBSC) condemns the viral disease of systemic racism that America has legitimized and practiced for over 400 years! We will not remain silent! There is more than one pandemic affecting our nation!

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, “I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism...”

If this country is to reclaim its moral stature, we must confess and atone for our original sin, or America will self-destruct as a nation. As Malcolm X once warned the white power structure, “the chickens have come home to roost.”

Without justice there can be no peace and justice demands that:

Law Enforcement is held accountable for their willful negligence and compliance in racist activities and actions.

Choke-holds and other life-threatening forms of physical restraint will not to be used when a suspect is not resisting arrest, and/or is already in custody.

When justified, as in the death of Mr. George Floyd, law enforcement officers are held accountable for their actions, and when warranted, arrested and prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

Finally, as black Catholic religious women, we call upon Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda, Archbishop of Minneapolis-St. Paul, and all bishops of good will to speak out on behalf of the church by denouncing these violent acts of hate and racism.

As Dr. King told us, "The arch of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."

If the most recent pastoral letter on racism, "Open Wide Our Hearts," written by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, is to have any moral legitimacy, then our episcopal leaders must give more than lip-service to addressing the sin of racism that is destroying communities of color around this nation.

As Christians, as Catholics, as people of faith, we must do more than just pray; we must model Jesus' message to love one's neighbor.

Our neighbor cannot breathe! Our neighbor is being lynched! Our neighbor is dying!

Our Red Record of Hate must end now!

Bishop Roy E. Campbell, Jr.

Archdiocese of Washington

June 3, 2020

Statement regarding the Death of George Floyd by the Most Reverend Roy E. Campbell, Jr. President of the National Black Catholic Congress

My fellow citizens of these United States of America, we have witnessed in graphic video detail, racism on display in the twenty-first century in the killing of George Floyd, an arrested, unarmed, handcuffed and subdued black man by a white police officer, who refused to acknowledge a fellow human being's cries of distress.

The National Black Catholic Congress (the Congress) joins the nonviolent calls and protests for a complete and transparent investigation of the killing of Mr. Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Along with a call for investigation and justice, the Congress echoes Archbishop Bernard Hebda, of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, in which he states in part, "... Let us pray for comfort for his grieving family and friends, peace for a hurting community and prudence while the process moves forward. We need a full investigation that results in rightful accountability and veritable justice..."

Justice is what Mr. Floyd and his family and friends deserve. Justice through equal and fair treatment under the law is what every person in this country deserves. Justice brings about Peace, and Peace allows Love to Flourish. This is what the founding fathers of this country tried to promote in the Constitution and what this nation fought a Civil War to uphold, that ended one hundred and fifty-five years ago. However, the racism brought on by the enslavement of Black Americans in the years leading up to the establishment of the United States of America to the Civil War, still exists and all too frequently displays its ugly effects today in racist attitudes and actions that discriminate one people from another.

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once wrote: "Discrimination is a hellhound that gnaws at Negroes in every waking moment of their lives to remind them that the lie of their inferiority is accepted as truth in the society dominating them." He also wrote: "Law and order exist for the purpose of establishing justice and when they fail in this purpose, they become the dangerously structured dams that block the flow of social progress."

Today, as we seek justice for George Floyd and his family, each of us must commit ourselves to the untiring pursuit of Justice, Peace and Love for every person in this country; because, together every person in this country makes us the United States of America.

The National Black Catholic Clergy Congress

A Statement on Current Events from The National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus

African American Spiritual

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble! tremble! tremble!

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

The National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus is trembling and heart-broken by recent tragic events – in particular, the racially motivated murders of unarmed Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and Breonna Taylor, to name a few – which again reveal the systemic and normative dehumanization of Black lives in this nation.

Scripture says “what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8). As men of God – clergy and religious – we are required to protest injustice and to work for real justice. We therefore condemn White supremacy, police brutality, systemic racism, and vigilante justice as unjust and in fact evil.

As Black men of God, we are especially angered by America's racist narrative of Blacks that – even in 2020 – leads to disproportionate targeting, incarceration and murder of Blacks, especially males. What U.S. Bishops said in their 1979 Pastoral Letter on Racism is still true: “Racism is an evil which endures in our society and in our Church.” While law enforcement may be the more visible gatekeepers of racist

societal norms, we see fit to protest the entirety of systemic racism which has infected law enforcers and law makers; politicians and business leaders; church and clerical leaders; educators and entertainers; and the list goes on.

The impact of systemic racism and oppression on our people is destructive – high blood pressure, alcoholism, addictions, broken relationships, unemployment, poverty, mental illness, trauma, and depression. This contributes to the underlying health conditions of Blacks; a vulnerability that COVID-19 tragically exposed to the world. Racism is a sin and all unchecked sin leads to death. Therefore, to revive the soul of our sinful nation, we must exorcise its demons of systemic racism and White supremacy.

That is why, as men of faith, we are called to act. The first action is always prayer. We pray for the souls of those tragically lost, for their grieving families and for their communities. We pray also for the healing of our nation from the suffocating impact of two viruses: COVID-19 and racism. Like COVID-19, those infected by racism can be asymptomatic, contagious and deadly. Treatment for the latter is not social distancing; rather, it's opening our hearts to come together.

Therefore, we pray also for ourselves and our leaders, for the love to see the whole truth and the grace to act with love upon the truth we see. If we cannot act with love, then we should not act at all. But if we are not moved to act, then we do not truly possess love.

As clergy and religious, we serve all of God's people even as Catholic Social Teaching humbles us to act as advocates for the poor and marginalized; to work for real justice; and to heal communities. If the Church does not walk humbly with grieving protestors, who will? When someone says "burn baby burn," who is there to say "love baby love?" Conversely, when well-healed voices sow lies, who is there to encourage this truth spoken by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., that "the beauty of America is the right to protest FOR rights?"

In truth, what makes one authentically Catholic or Christian? It is not a narcissistic image of oneself with a Bible or Church, as in a photo op; rather, it is one's radical, unconditional love for the image of God stamped within all people, no matter their origins or walks of life. It is a living out of Christ's teaching that "whatever you did to the least of my people, you did to me" (Matt 25:40).

For over 50 years, through many toils and prayers, the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus has worked to liberate the nation and Church we love from systemic racism and White supremacy (see nbccc.cc). For our Church and nation to matter in Black lives today, that work must continue. We remain determined to bring about justice in America. When good people do nothing, evil wins. When good people stand up for truth and justice, America wins.

Yes, God bless America. When will America behave in a way that will justly bless God?

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The Assumptions of White Privilege and What We Can Do About It

Amy Cooper knew exactly what she was doing. We all do. And that's the problem.

"Every white person in this country — I do not care what he says or what she says — knows one thing. ... They know that they would not like to be black here. If they know that, they know everything they need to know. And whatever else they may say is a lie." — James Baldwin, "Speech at the University of California Berkeley," 1979

It has never been easy to be black in America. Still, the past few months have pushed me to depths of outrage, pain and

despondency that are unmatched in my 63 years of life. Look at what has transpired:

- *The COVID-19 pandemic* showed that while all might be vulnerable, we are not equally vulnerable. Blacks, Latinos and Native peoples are the vast majority of those infected and killed by this virus. In some places, the levels of "disparity" (such a sanitizing word!) are catastrophic. But as tragic as this is, it was entirely predictable and even expected. The contributing factors for this vulnerability have been documented for decades: lack of insurance, less access to healthcare, negligent treatment from and by healthcare professionals, overcrowded housing, unsafe and unsanitary working conditions. All of this compounded by how the least paid and protected workers are now considered "essential" and must be exposed to the virus' hazards. As a young black grocery clerk told me, "Essential is just a nice word for sacrificial." Sacrificed for the comfort of those who can isolate and work from home, who are disproportionately white.
- *Ahmaud Arbery*, an unarmed 25-year-old black man, who was executed on Feb. 23 as three white men stalked him while he was jogging in Brunswick, Georgia. One of the killers had ties to local law enforcement. Only after public protests and the passing of 74 days were any arrests made and charges filed over this death.
- *Breonna Taylor*, a 26-year-old African American woman, who was killed by Louisville police officers on March 13 after they kicked in the door of her apartment unannounced and without identifying themselves. Fearful for their lives, her boyfriend fired his lawfully possessed gun. Breonna was killed with eight bullets fired by three officers, under circumstances that have yet to be satisfactorily explained.
- *Christian Cooper*, a young black man — a birdwatcher — who was reported to the police May 25 by Amy Cooper (no relation), a young white woman, who called 911 to say that "an African American man" was threatening her in New York's Central Park merely because he had the gall to ask her to comply with the park's posted regulations to leash her dog.

- *George Floyd*, an unarmed 46-year-old African American man, who was brutally killed on May 25 in Minneapolis by a white police officer who knelt on his neck for 8 minutes and 46 seconds, despite being restrained, despite the urgent requests of onlookers, despite his repeated desperate pleas: "I can't breathe."
- *Omar Jimenez*, a black Latino CNN reporter, who was arrested on May 29 in the middle of doing live reports on events in Minneapolis, while a white CNN reporter doing the same thing, at the same time in the same neighborhood, was not only *not* arrested but was treated with "consummate politeness" by the authorities. The stark contrast was so jarring that Jimenez's white colleagues noted that the only possible difference was the race of the reporters.

All of this weighs on my spirit. I try to pray, but inner quiet eludes me. I simply sit in silence on Pentecost weekend before a lit candle praying, "Come, Holy Spirit" as tears fall. Words fail me. I ponder the futility of speaking out, yet again, trying to think of how to say what has been said, what I have said, so often before.

Then it occurred to me. Amy Cooper holds the key.

The event in Central Park is not the most heinous listed above. The black man didn't die — thankfully. Compared to the others, it has received little attention. But if you understand Amy Cooper, then all the rest, and much more, makes sense. And points the way forward.

White privilege

Let's recall what Amy Cooper did. After a black man tells her to obey the posted signs that require her to leash her dog in a public park, she tells him she's going to call the police "and I'm going to tell them that there's an African American man threatening my life." Then she does just that, calling 911 and saying, "There's a man, an African American, he has a bicycle helmet. He is recording me and threatening me and my dog." She continues, in a breathless voice, "I'm being threatened by a man in the Ramble [a wooded area of Central Park]. Please send the cops immediately!" This despite the fact that Christian Cooper's camera records the events and shows that he made no threatening

moves toward her, spoke to her calmly and without insult, and kept his distance from her the whole time.

In short, she decided to call the police on a black man for nothing more than politely asking her to obey the park's rules. And made up a lie to put him in danger.

She knew what she was doing. And so do we. The situation is completely "legible" as my academic colleagues would say. What did she and rest of us know? Why did she act as she did?

- She assumed that her lies would be more credible than his truth.
- She assumed that she would have the presumption of innocence.
- She assumed that he, the black man, would have a presumption of guilt.
- She assumed that the police would back her up.
- She assumed that her race would be an advantage, that she would be believed because she is white. (By the way, this is what we mean by white privilege).
- She assumed that his race would be a burden, even an insurmountable one.
- She assumed that the world should work for her and against him.
- She assumed that she had the upper hand in this situation.
- She assumed that she could exploit deeply ingrained white fears of black men.
- She assumed that she could use these deeply ingrained white fears to keep a black man in his place.
- She assumed that if he protested his innocence against her, he would be seen as "playing the race card."
- She assumed that no one would accuse her of "playing the race card," because no one accuses white people of playing the race card when using race to their advantage.
- She assumed that he knew that any confrontation with the police would not go well for him.

- She assumed that the frame of "black rapist" versus "white damsel in distress" would be clearly understood by everyone: the police, the press and the public.
- She assumed that the racial formation of white people would work in her favor.
- She assumed that her knowledge of how white people view the world, and especially black men, would help her.
- She assumed that a black man had no right to tell her what to do.
- She assumed that the police officers would agree.
- She assumed that even if the police made no arrest, that a lot of white people would take her side and believe her anyway.
- She assumed that Christian Cooper could and would understand all of the above.

(And she was right. He clearly knew what was at stake, which is why he had the presence of mind to record what happened).

I am not a mind reader. I have no access to Amy Cooper's inner thoughts. But I know, and we all know, that without these assumptions, her words and actions — her lies — make no sense. We also have to admit that her assumptions are not unreasonable. In fact, we have to admit that they are well-founded. They match what we know to be true about how the country works and about how too many white people think.

All of this was the almost instantaneous reasoning behind her actions. By her own admission, she acted out of reflex. No one taught Amy Cooper all of this. Likely, no one gave her an explicit class on how whiteness works in America. But she knew what she was doing.

And so do we. We understand her behavior. We know how our culture frames whiteness and folks of color. We know how race works in America.

The fundamental assumption behind all the others is that white people matter, or should matter, more than people of color. Certainly more than black people. That black lives don't matter, or at least not as

much as white lives. That's the basic assumption behind Amy Cooper's decisions, actions and words. That's the basic assumption that links Christian Cooper with COVID-19, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd and Omar Jimenez.

Amy Cooper knew that. We all know that. So who taught her? Who taught us?

The ways of whiteness

This is where things may get uncomfortable for most of you, who I assume (and hope) will be white. Because just as no one gave her an explicit class on the ways of whiteness and how it works in society — and for her — most likely you never received a formal class or explanation either. It's just something that you know, or better, that you realize on some distant yet real part of your brain. At some early age, you realized that no matter how bad things got for you, at least you would never be black. And it dawned on you, though you rarely consciously say it, that you would never want to be black. Because you realized, even without being explicitly told, that being white makes life easier. Even if you have to do some hard work along the way, at least you don't have to carry the burden of blackness as a hindrance.

And if you're really honest, something else dawned somewhere in your mind. You realized that, if you wanted, by being white you could make things hard — much harder — for others. Especially black folks.

How did you, how did I, how did we all learn this? No one taught you. No one had to. It's something that you absorbed just by living. Just by taking in subtle clues such as what the people in charge look like. Whose history you learned in school. What the bad guys look like on TV. The kind of jokes you heard. How your parents, grandparents and friends talked about people that didn't look like you.

I can hear some of you protesting. You don't want to admit this, especially your ability to make life rough for people of color. You don't want to face it. But Amy Cooper made the truth plain and obvious. She knew deep in her soul that she lived in a country where things

should work in the favor of white people. She knew the real deal. We all do.

That's the reason for the grief, outrage, lament, anger, pain and fury that have been pouring into our nation's streets. Because folks are tired. Not only of the individual outrages. But of the fundamental assumption that ties them all together: that black lives don't matter and should not matter — at least not as much as white ones.

We struggle to admit that Amy Cooper reveals what W.E.B. Du Bois calls "the souls of white folks." Because, to quote James Baldwin again, facing the truth "would reveal more about America to Americans than Americans want to know." Or admit that they know.

What don't we want to admit? That Amy Cooper is not simply a rogue white person or a mean-spirited white woman who did an odious thing. Yes, we should and must condemn her words and actions. But we don't want to admit that there is a lot more to this story. That she knew, we all know, that she had the support of an unseen yet very real apparatus of collective thoughts, fears, beliefs, practices and history.

This is what we mean by systemic racism. I could call it white supremacy, although I know that white people find that term even more of a stumbling block than white privilege. Essayist Ta-Nehisi Coates gives the best short description of this complex reality called white supremacy. He describes it as "an age-old system in America which holds that whites should always be ensured that they will not sink to a certain level. And that level is the level occupied by black people." Amy Cooper knew that. And so do we.

We don't want to admit that Amy Cooper is not simply a bad white woman. We don't want to face the truth about America that her words and actions betray. We don't want to admit that present in Central Park that morning was the scaffolding of centuries-long accumulations of the benefits of whiteness. Benefits that burden people of color. Benefits that kill black and brown people.

Without facing this truth, Amy Cooper's actions make no sense. She knew what she was doing. And so do we. Even if we do not want to admit it.

Where do we begin?

"But I don't know what to do with this information." That's what a white male student declared in class after I gave a lecture detailing the long tragic history of medical experimentation and maltreatment inflicted upon African Americans by the medical establishment, that is, by white doctors and nurses, by white hospitals, including Catholic institutions sponsored by white religious communities.

I understand the feelings of helplessness, confusion and even despondency that can afflict us. It's easy to be overwhelmed by the magnitude of the problem, by the immense weight of centuries of accumulated fear, resentment, privilege and righteous anger. It can be shocking to confront the vastness of this nation's commitment to white benefit and advantage. Where do we begin?

Let me be more specific: what are white people to do now that they know that they know what Amy Cooper knows — assuming they want to do anything? (The reason for the specificity will become clear).

First, understand the difference between being uncomfortable and being threatened. There is no way to tell the truth about race in this country without white people becoming uncomfortable. Because the plain truth is that if it were up to people of color, racism would have been resolved, over and done, a long time ago. *The only reason for racism's persistence is that white people continue to benefit from it.*

Repeat that last sentence. Make it your mantra. Because until the country accepts that truth, we will never move beyond superficial words and ineffective half-measures.

Systemic racism benefits white people. That's the truth that Amy Cooper knew and that we all know. That truth supports all the assumptions that sustain the racial craziness and insanity in which we live. I know that bluntly stating that systemic racism benefits white

people makes people — especially white people — uncomfortable. I also feel a pang of discomfort in being so direct. (I know the kinds of online comments and emails that are sure to follow.)

But avoiding and sugarcoating this truth is killing people of color. Silence for the sake of making white people comfortable is a luxury we can no longer afford.

If white people are unwilling to face very uncomfortable truths, then the country is doomed to remain what Abraham Lincoln called "a house divided." And he warned that such a house cannot stand.

What to do next? Nothing. *Sit in the discomfort this hard truth brings.* Let it become agonizing. Let it move you to tears, to anger, to guilt, to shame, to embarrassment. Over what? Over your ignorance. Over the times you went along with something you knew was wrong. Or when you told a racist joke because you could. Because you knew that your white friends and family would let you get away with it, or even join in. Because you thought it was "just a joke." Or the times you wouldn't hire the person of color because you knew your white employees would have a problem with it and you didn't want the hassle. Or when you knew the person of color was in the right, but it was easier not to upset your white friends. Or wealthy donors, who are almost always white. (By the way, the wealth disparity didn't just happen nor is it due to black and brown folks' laziness. Look at the complexions of our "essential workers" for proof.) Most of all, feel the guilt, the pain, the embarrassment over doing nothing and saying nothing when you witnessed obvious racism.

Stay in the discomfort, the anxiety, the guilt, the shame, the anger. Because only when a critical mass of white folks are outraged, grieved and pained over the status quo — only when white people become upset enough to declare, "This cannot and will not be!" — only then will real change begin to become a possibility.

Third, *admit your ignorance and do something about it.* Understand that there is a lot about our history and about life that we're going to have to unlearn. And learn over. Malcolm X said that the two factors responsible for American racism are greed and skillful miseducation.

We have all been taught a sanitized version of America that masks our terrible racial history.

For example, most of my white students — and students of color, too — know nothing of the terror of lynching. They don't know that for a 30-year period from 1885-1915, on average every third day a black person was brutally and savagely and publicly murdered by white mobs. This wasn't taught, or it was taught to mean only that, in the words of a white student, "some people got beat up real bad." (Note the passive voice, which obscures who did these beatings and why).

Yet without knowing this history, the Civil Rights Movement only becomes a feel-good story about desegregation and bringing races together — sharing schools, drinking fountains and (maybe) neighborhoods. The brutal, savage and sadistic violence that whites inflicted with impunity upon black — and brown and Asian — people in order to defend "white supremacy" (their words, not mine) is never faced. Nor do we have to face the truth that most racial violence in our history has been and continues to be inflicted by whites against people of color.

To create a different world, we must learn how this one came to be. And unlearn what we previously took for granted. This means that we have to read. And learn from the perspectives of people of color. (Not to toot my own horn, but my book *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church* is a good place to start).

Demand that your parish and diocese sponsor not just an evening on race, but a whole series. How about during Lent? Tell your priests and religious education directors to make anti-racism a staple feature of their homilies and your children's religious formation. Insist that your children learn a truer picture of the world than you did, and not only during Black History Month. Take a stand and say you'll take your presence and dollars elsewhere if they don't. And when they do the right thing, write them a note of support — because, trust me, they will hear plenty from the other side.

While you're at it, write your bishop and ask how anti-racism is part of your church leaders' formation for ministry. Ask how he is actively

educating himself to become anti-racist. Let him know that if seminarians and candidates for ministry and religious life are unwilling or unable to be actively anti-racist, then they do not have a vocation for church leadership since they haven't embraced a fundamental requirement of Christian discipleship.

Fourth, *have the courage to confront your family and friends*. I tell my white students that they will see and hear more naked racial bigotry than I do. Because when I am in the room, everyone knows how to act. Sociologist Joe Feagin documents how white people behave one way when on the "front stage," that is, in public. But "backstage," in the company of fellow whites, a different code of behavior prevails. Here racist acts and words are excused: "That's just the way your father was raised." "Your grandmother is of a different generation." "It's just a joke." "But deep down, he's really a good person." "But if you ignore all that, he's a really fun person to be with." "You can't choose your family, but you gotta love them anyway." "It's only once a year." "I wish he wouldn't talk that way. But you can't change how people feel."

I understand the desire to have peaceful or at least conflict-free relationships with family and friends. But as the Rev. Martin Luther King said so well, "There comes a time when silence is betrayal." Silence means consent. Or at least, complicity.

Until white people call out white people, there will always be safe places for racial ugliness to brew and fester. And people like Amy Cooper will continue to assume that white people will always have their backs, no matter what. And they won't be wrong. And black people will continue to die.

Fifth, *be "unconditionally pro-life."* These are the words of St. Pope John Paul II from his final pastoral visit to the United States. He summoned Catholics to "eradicate every form of racism" as part of their wholehearted and essential commitment to life.

This has a very serious consequence: You cannot vote for or support a president who is blatantly racist, mocks people of color, separates Latino families and consigns brown children into concentration camps, and still call yourself "pro-life." We need to face, finally and at

long last, the uncomfortable yet real overlap between the so-called "pro-life" movement and the advocates of racial intolerance.

In the name of our commitment to life, we must challenge not only these social policies, but also the attitude that cloaks support for racism under the guise of being "pro-life." John Paul declared that racism is a life issue. Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and the many black and brown victims of COVID-19 prove it. It is way past time for Catholics to become "unconditionally pro-life."

Finally, *pray*. Yes, racism is a political issue and a social divide. But at its deepest level, racism is a soul sickness. It is a profound warping of the human spirit that enables human beings to create communities of callous indifference toward their darker sisters and brothers. Stripped to its core, white supremacy is a disturbing interior disease, a malformed consciousness that enables white people to not care for those who don't look like them. As historian Paul Wachtel succinctly declares in his book *Race in the Mind of America*, "The real meaning of race comes down largely to this: *Is this someone I should care about?*"

This soul sickness can only be healed by deep prayer. Yes, we need social reforms. We need equal educational opportunities, changed police practices, equitable access to health care, an end to employment and housing discrimination. But only an invasion of divine love will shatter the small images of God that enable us to live undisturbed by the racism that benefits some and terrorizes so many.

In her essay, "The Desire for God and the Transformative Power of Contemplation," Baltimore Carmelite Sr. Constance FitzGerald writes, "The time will come when God's light will invade our lives and show us everything we have avoided seeing. Then will be manifest the confinement of our carefully constructed meanings, the limitations of our life projects, the fragility of the support systems or infrastructures on which we depend ... [and] the darkness in our own heart."

God's love is subversive and destructive. It exposes self-serving political ideologies as shortsighted and corrosive.

And yet FitzGerald and the Carmelite tradition insist that God subverts our plans and projects for the sake of new life. FitzGerald relates how, through unmasking the shallowness of our "achievements," God leads us to "new minds, as well as new intuitions, new wills, and passionate new desires."

Perhaps, then, the grace of this dark time in our nation is that it reveals how racially toxic our politics, society and culture have truly become, in order to spur us to build a new culture based not on the exploitation of fear but on solidarity with and for the least among us.

We need to pray for a new infusion of the Spirit and for the courage to let this Spirit transform our hearts. Come, Holy Spirit!

(Do we dare to really make that our prayer?)

Is this enough?

I can hear some of you saying, "But is this enough?" I am under no illusion that these actions, by themselves, can erase the accumulated debris of centuries of commitment to white preference and black detriment. None of us can do all that is required at this moment.

But just because we cannot do everything doesn't mean we should not do something. We are not as helpless as we fear. Moreover, helplessness is an emotion that we cannot afford to indulge. As James Baldwin believed, despair is an option that only the comfortable can afford to entertain.

We can create a new society, one where more and more people will challenge the assumptions of white racial privilege that sustain Amy Cooper's universe. *Our* universe. One built on a different set of assumptions, one where all lives truly do matter because black lives finally will matter.

I end with the final words of *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church*:

Social life is made by human beings. The society we live in is the outcome of human choices and decisions. This means that human

beings can change things. What humans break, divide, and separate, we can — with God's help — also heal, unite, and restore.

What is now does not have to be. Therein lies the hope. And the challenge.

Come, Holy Spirit!

Fill the hearts of your faithful.

Enkindle within us the fire of your love.

Come, Holy Spirit!

Breathe into us a fiery passion for justice.

Especially for those who have the breath of life crushed from them.

Amen.