

June, 2020

Louisiana Interchurch Conference
Statement in Response to the killing of George Floyd

Seeking Forgiveness, Striving for Justice

We who represent faith communities throughout Louisiana have been broken-hearted, sickened, and outraged to watch another video of an African American man being killed before our very eyes. What is more astounding is that this is happening within mere weeks of several other such occurrences. This is the latest wake-up call that needs to be answered by each of us in a spirit of determined conversion. This is a time when we are called to witness to the principles of the faith we hold in common.

Racism is not a thing of the past or simply a throwaway political issue to be bandied about when convenient. It continues to be a real and present danger that must be met head on. As members of the Church, we must stand for the more difficult right and just actions instead of the easy wrongs of indifference. We cannot turn a blind eye to these atrocities and yet still try to profess to respect every human life. We serve a God of love, mercy, and justice.

While it is expected that we will plead for peaceful non-violent protests, and we certainly do; we also stand in passionate support of communities that are understandably outraged. Too many communities around this country feel their voices are not being heard, their complaints about racist treatment are unheeded, and we are not doing enough to point out that this deadly treatment is antithetical to the Gospel of Life. In the days since the death and burial of Mr. George Floyd the continuing protests have awakened a nation and a world to the need to address the sinful pandemic of racism.

For people of color interactions with police can be fraught with fear and even danger. People of good conscience must never turn a blind eye when fellow citizens are being deprived of their human dignity and even their lives. Indifference is not an option. As People of Faith, we unequivocally state that racism is an affront to the sanctity of human life.

We join with people in mourning the death of Mr. George Floyd and all others who have lost their lives in a similar manner. We plead for an end to the violence in the wake of this tragedy and for the victims of the rioting. We pray for comfort for grieving families and friends. We pray for peace across the United States, particularly in Minnesota, while the legal process moves forward. We also anticipate a full investigation that results in rightful accountability and actual justice. We support the efforts of those who are seeking change and the reform of the criminal justice system in our states and nation, and we pray that those efforts will bring forth a more just society. We recognize that without justice,

there can be no peace, for without justice, any peace achieved is cheap, temporary, and ultimately, a lie.

We join hands with all people of goodwill to come together, particularly with those who are from different racial and cultural backgrounds. In this encounter, let us all seek greater understanding among God's people. So many people who historically have been disenfranchised continue to experience sadness and pain, yet they endeavor to persevere and remain people of great faith. We encourage spiritual leaders and church members to encounter and more authentically accompany them, listen to their stories, and learn from them, finding substantive ways to enact systemic change. It is only through such encounters that we will begin to understand the depth of their suffering and make a true commitment to changing the institutions that have continued to enslave people of color in the United States. Only then can we bring about healing against the evil of racism in our land.

In recent days Christians around the world celebrated Pentecost; we call upon all people of Faith to pray and work toward a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Let us pray for a supernatural desire to rid ourselves of the harm that bias and prejudice cause. We call upon members of our churches and all people of goodwill to pray to the Holy Spirit for the Spirit of Truth to touch the hearts of all in the United States and to come down upon our criminal justice and law enforcement systems. Finally, let each and every person of faith regardless of their ethnicity, ask God with sincere hearts, to heal our deeply broken view of each other, as well as our deeply broken society. We need to humble ourselves and seek God's face and turn from our wicked ways. Then healing will come.

The Louisiana Interchurch Conference also calls on congregations to be beacons of light in their own communities by addressing racism in its various manifestations, acknowledging the trauma experienced by those in the Black community and working tirelessly to end racism and White supremacy once and for all. Sharing around meals, telling stories, joining in dialogue is a beginning toward understanding how to begin to overcome racism. Finally, let us not be timid in confessing the complicity of the Church in perpetuating racism as a necessary step toward dismantling this moral plague from our institutions and communities.