



DIOCESE OF VENICE IN FLORIDA
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

June 9, 2020

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Over the past weeks, there has been civil unrest in response to the death of George Floyd and the suffering caused by racism in the United States. Anger and frustration are felt by many, and countless protests are evidenced in cities throughout the country and the world. At the same time, the Church encourages peaceful response and prays for an end to racism.

The Church, Her leaders and the Faithful have an important role in confronting the sin of racism. Responding to the call to defend human dignity, the Church must raise Her voice against every instance of the evil of racism. I add my voice and condemn racism in all its forms.

I have requested that all Priests speak out against racism in their homilies for this coming weekend, June 13-14. In doing so, I call to mind the words of the Holy Father, who has recently said, "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."

As the Church will be celebrating the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, it is necessary that we, as the Body of Christ, speak also about the suffering of so many. I rarely have requested the priests to address a specific societal issue. Neither the Church in the Diocese of Venice nor any of us can stand idly by and be silent in the face of racial injustice, an evil in our society and the world.

It has been suggested that Parishes should also plan prayer sessions and programming to address the question of racism. Maintaining precautions related to the Coronavirus, it is important to offer an opportunity for prayer for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit to cleanse the hearts of all from bias, prejudice, and racism. Study sessions or presentations on the USCCB's Pastoral Letter on Racism, *Open Wide Our Hearts*, may also be beneficial. Further, you may wish to look for opportunities for encounter and accompaniment, as well as dialogue, with those from backgrounds that have experienced particular discrimination. This is an important time for us to offer leadership and counsel, and let us never forget, prayer.

This opportunity is taken to extend to you the assurances of my continued consideration, as well as my prayers during the Pandemic and during these challenging times for our country and our society. Let us find unity in respect for the human dignity of each and every person made in the image and likeness of God.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Frank J. Dewane
Bishop of the Diocese of
Venice in Florida

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