



THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF PHOENIX

June 3, 2020

A Pastoral Statement from Bishop Olmsted to the Diocese of Phoenix

“I pray that they all be one.” (Jn. 17:21)

Peace be with you.

This past weekend we celebrated the great Feast of Pentecost, a day that invokes the Holy Spirit to renew the hearts of all. The Church celebrates this feast each year as we plead for the courage that was given to the Apostles to leave the upper room, transform the world and share the Good News of Jesus Christ.

This year the feast day was observed in the context of the recent social unrest that is challenging our community and nation. The senseless and shameful killing of George Floyd focuses our attention on the painful reality that racism and hatred continue to be prevalent in our communities.

Racism is a sin — it is a direct affront to the dignity of the human person who is a unique, precious gift from God.¹ We are all brothers and sisters equally created in the image of God. This fundamental truth is key to the Gospel message. As our Holy Father Pope Francis said today, “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.”²

I pray for the repose of the soul of George Floyd and the consolation of his grieving family and friends. I unite my voice with the Black community, people of color, and all who are working for an end to mistreatment, discrimination and injustice.

The following words from Catholic Charities, the social service arm of the Diocese of Phoenix, are important for us to embrace: As a Church we cannot ignore or condone injustice in any form – including racial injustice. We cannot be numb. We cannot separate

¹ “Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love”: <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/racism>

² Pope prays for U.S., calls racism a pro-life issue: <https://www.catholicnews.com/services/englishnews/2020/pope-prays-for-us-calls-racism-a-pro-life-issue.cfm>

ourselves from the wrongs being perpetrated in our society. We must continue to stand in solidarity with those who are vulnerable and oppressed.

We must work together to strengthen our families and communities. So let us lead in peace, not in a violent or destructive manner, remembering the words of Jesus, **“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God”** (Mt. 5:9). Let not our differences lead to division or hatred; rather, let them lead to a profound respect for the dignity of each person. Let us strive to understand rather than to tear each other down.

I share these words of Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops: “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 nations sacred promise – to be a beloved community of life, liberty, and equality for all.”³

Let us receive the Holy Spirit as the Apostles did and have the courage with God’s grace to do our part to address this evil in society. Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth.

+ Thomas J. Olmsted
Bishop of Phoenix

³ Statement of U.S. Bishops’ President on George Floyd and the Protests in American Cities:
<http://uscgb.org/news/2020/20-84.cfm>