

AMDG

June 5, 2020

**Letter to Gesu Parishioners on Racism in Our Country Today on the Occasion  
of the Killing of George Floyd and the Civil Unrest Across Our Country**

Dear Gesu Parishioners and Friends:

I write to you at a time of crisis in our country in the wake of the killing of George Floyd and several other unarmed African-American citizens and the resulting protests and civil unrest that have followed in the last few weeks. I want to state loudly and clearly that we as Roman Catholics denounce any type of racism and violence against our African American brothers and sisters. Our hearts break when we hear, over and over again, the stories of our brothers and sisters being mistreated by some members of law enforcement and by so many others. While rejecting the violent protests and destruction of property that have occurred, we also want to say that we understand the anger and hurt that our fellow citizens feel and we stand firmly with them and on their side.

As Catholics, our teaching on the sanctity of life is one of our greatest treasures. Now, as we have done so often and so well when discussing the protection of the unborn, we are called to take our beliefs on life into our national discourse on racial justice. We must speak boldly and often that every life is sacred. For far too long many in our nation have not treated our African American brothers and sisters as sacred. We Catholics cannot tolerate racial hatred and injustice. We must take a stand for our brothers and sisters who are the object of so much hatred and unjust treatment. For Catholics, this position is nothing new, but we recognize that we have not been vocal enough in clearly applying Church teaching when discussing race in America.

While we recognize the sacrifices and honorable actions exhibited by the majority of police officers to protect and serve our communities, watching the video of the killing of George Floyd has been a shocking and discouraging reminder that human dignity is still not being respected by many Americans. This should be very disturbing to the followers of Jesus.

Now is the time to take action. Following our Gospel call, we must act and use our voice to consistently denounce racism and bigotry. We must defend the right of Americans to peacefully protest without fear of repercussion. We need to add our voice to all those who are seeking a change of attitudes, a change of heart in our nation, so that the

dream of equality can become reality, that people of all races are treated equally and have the rights promised in our country's founding documents of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

So what can we do? First, in a prayerful way, we can examine our own hearts to see where we may need conversion on this issue. We can pray for the conversion of the hearts of those who hate, that they may come to recognize the beauty of every human life. We can contact our elected officials and let them know what Catholics believe. We can make a donation to organizations that work for peace and racial equality. We can engage in constructive conversations with family and neighbors. We can challenge ourselves to learn more about what the Catholic Church teaches so clearly. Our website and bulletin is a good place to begin. We have many tools we can use to help combat racial injustice. Let each of us do what we can to make the world more hopeful and just.

My brothers and sisters, our Church has repeatedly asked us to stand up for the dignity of life. Alongside the issue of protecting the unborn, there are many other issues that we are called to act on. Racism is one of those issues.

May God bless you.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Karl J. Kiser". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the text "May God bless you."

Karl J. Kiser, S. J.

Pastor