



Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama

2121 3rd Avenue North
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A CALL FOR UNITY AND DIALOGUE

The death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota on Memorial Day, May 25, was unfortunate and unnecessary. A form of brutality used in restraining Floyd was improper and universally acknowledged as unfitting for any professional police officer. No human being should be treated the way Floyd was treated. We grieve his loss with his family and friends.

And we share as well the concern of George Floyd's brother, Terrence, about the unnecessary violence that is escalating as a result of George's death. That violence is now happening here in Birmingham. George's brother has told everyone that George would not want this kind of reaction. He has spoken about nonviolence, about showing peace and sharing God's love.

A similar kind of reaction that is needed is the kind a recent conference in Birmingham found - the conference co-hosted by the Diocese of Birmingham and entitled "Black and White in America: How Deep the Divide?"

The conference, held at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School March 3-4, 2016, concluded that while much progress has been made in race relations throughout America, great divisions still do exist. It is by listening to one another that the issues that divide can surface and be resolved harmoniously.

Listening opportunities were found and did begin to take place around the Diocese of Birmingham. A model was established; and efforts will, hopefully, continue in the future. (The conference talks have been published and are available from the Diocese of Birmingham's Office of Black Catholic Ministry. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has also issued a statement regarding George Floyd's death. The statement is available at www.usccb.org.)

Mr. James Watts of the Office of Black Catholic Ministry in the Diocese of Birmingham is laying the foundation for future efforts like the one held at Beeson Divinity School.

Birmingham is ground-zero for the Civil Right Movement. Our city and diocese are currently poised to model constructive non-violent methods of dealing with racial divisions. We can set the tone for the rest of the nation. Great strides have already been made. Let us keep those positive efforts for unity, harmony, reconciliation, and peace going!

Our plea to the wonderful people of our city and diocese is the plea St. Paul once made to the people of Ephesus (4:3): "Make every effort to preserve the unity which has the Spirit as its origin and peace as its binding force."

Most Reverend Robert J. Baker, Apostolic Administrator
Most Reverend Steven J. Raica, Bishop-Elect
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