



Statement of Bishop Edgar M. da Cunha, S.D.V., on the Death of George Floyd and its Aftermath June 3, 2020

The past week in our country has been trying, disturbing, and difficult. We shared understandable concern and anxiety as the first steps were taken toward a reopening of our pandemic-shuttered society. We rejoiced with the reopening of our churches. At the same time, we have been shocked and shaken, as we witness in horror the senseless killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis and the national protest that followed. In its aftermath, we have seen understandable outrage expressed by so many people, renewed questions of racism, and at times hate and anger that has led to violence and destruction.

While some question how the brutal killing of George Floyd could happen in our country, many point to it as a stark demonstration of prevailing racism and prejudice. It is imperative, I think, to take this moment to try to understand the experiences of others especially of those who have been historically disenfranchised; of those who still today experience injustice, indignity, and unequal opportunities only because of their race or the color of their skin.

As members of the Church, we cannot turn a blind eye when citizens are deprived of their human dignity and even their lives. In a recent pastoral letter against racism entitled, "Open Wide Our Hearts," I joined with my brother bishops in the U.S. in pointing out that, "racism is a life issue." Or as the bishops said in the pastoral letter, "Brothers and Sisters to Us," "Racism is a sin: a sin that divides the human family, blots out the image of God among specific members of that family, and violates the fundamental human dignity of those called to be children of the same Father."

Our efforts to build a culture of life needs to include a commitment by all of us to combat racism and its effects in our civic and social institutions. This commitment needs to bring to an end the indifference that has allowed the evil of racism to persist. Some may believe it is enough to be non-racist, but history has shown the need for more. We need to be actively anti-racist.

In a message addressed to the U.S. today (June 3, 2020) at his livestreamed general audience, Pope Francis said, "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. At the same time, we have to recognize that 'the violence of recent nights is self-destructive and self-defeating. Nothing is gained by violence and so much is lost.'"

I ask all in our diocesan community to pray for the repose of George Floyd, for the comfort of his family and friends; and for all who have suffered in any way from racial injustice. Let us pray for peace in our country; that those who feel the indignation brought by the events of the last few days may find peaceful ways to effect change, never by the use of violence. Because violence begets violence; it does not bring about peace. Let us also work, encourage others, talk about and do our part to create a peaceful response to this tragedy across our country, one that ensures the safety of our citizens. Violence and destruction serve no purpose other than to compound the challenges at hand. Our collective response must reflect a respect for all people and a unified resolve to work for equality and justice for all.

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