

Grace Notes in Miniature,

Thursday June 4th, 2020

Dear friends:

I am sure that we are all seriously troubled by recent events which, as the proverbial straw on the camel's back, have sparked protests and, south of the border, riots in response.

As many of you will know, I am fiercely proud of my chaplains and eager to profile the work they do.

I want to share this statement, penned by Andrea Taylor, the Chaplaincy Leader at Assumption, and endorsed by her colleagues, which I believe says well what we as followers of Christ need to say and put on record.



Like many people of faith, and united with Christians who also believe in the dignity of each human person, we as Catholic school chaplaincy leaders are heartbroken that the experiences of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) continue to be steeped in racism. We are growing in our understanding of the need to be actively anti-racist in a society that has been built on white, euro-centric colonialism, and we stand in solidarity with all who are rising up against systemic racism present in our society.

As Catholic Christians, we work for and cling to the ideal that our church is universal: that all people, no matter the colour of their skin, are invited to be equal members of the Body of Christ. We also acknowledge that centuries of this understanding have not proven to be enough to undo the oppression that Black, Indigenous and racialized people face on a daily basis in North American society, or even in our own faith communities.

We work in institutions whose mission and values are rooted in love for God and for one another. However, we acknowledge that these same institutions were built by a white-centric society and openness to institutional change is needed for all to feel welcome in our communities.

We recognize that not all racism comes from a place of hatred; that even those of us who have no intention of inflicting racial injustice upon others are often complicit in our unconscious biases, our assumptions in the universality of human experiences, and in our silence when oppressed and vulnerable people share their truth with us. In the words of Sister Helen Prejean, "Being kind in an unjust system is not enough."

At a time when this issue is front and centre, we commit to fighting racism wherever we come to recognize it - including within ourselves. Specifically, we commit to doing this work by:

- Educating ourselves by reading the works of anti-racism activists, educators, and authors;
- Seeking out and using the works of BIPOC authors, theologians, spiritual writers, and artists, attributing their work to them, and justly compensating them for their work by practicing fair purchasing;
- Never placing our own learning about racism above the experience of racism of BIPOC students, staff and families. We commit to amplifying the voices of those who go unheard;
- Creating safe spaces where BIPOC students and staff members can speak their truth without reproach or judgement, even when it makes us uncomfortable. When we do feel uncomfortable, we will examine our discomfort and question any defensiveness we find within ourselves.

- Acknowledging that our BIPOC students and staff may not have the same experience of church and faith that we have, that some of those experiences may have been negative ones, and that church may not always be a source of hope and healing due to past trauma.
- Using more inclusive language and images in our prayers, reflections, and where possible, liturgical celebrations, so that our BIPOC students and staff can see themselves reflected in the outward expressions of their faith tradition.
- Intervening in calm and respectful ways if we see racist interactions occurring, without escalating the situation, understanding that the stress, energy and social fallout in these situations is disproportionately higher for Black, Indigenous and racialized people.
- Believing BIPOC when they tell us something is racist, or that they have experienced racism. If we are told that we have said or done something racist, we will apologize and hold ourselves accountable by admitting fault and seeking to do better.
- Talking with non-BIPOC students and staff about racism. We will teach by modeling how to calmly and productively speak up when they witness discrimination.
- Valuing Black, Indigenous and other People of Colour's contributions to our culture and society. We will promote their contributions rather than appropriate it.
- Loving our Black, Indigenous, and racialized students, staff and colleagues as Christ loves us.



(This list was compiled based on a list of examples of concrete ways white people can use their privilege for good written by Nicole Stamp

https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=10158793642489341&id=509674340)

We will continue to pray for an end to racial injustice in our communities, our nation, and around the world, and for the healing of racial trauma. May our prayers always move us to work for justice and peace for all peoples.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=idQ1n3cdgfo>

And this prayer offered by Chaplaincy Leader Wayne Lachapelle at Notre Dame.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

With this prayer God, we acknowledge the depth of evils that have been perpetrated against black people in North America.

From slavery, to lynchings, to white supremacist laws, to the denial of voting rights, to all the ways both large and small, that abuses have occurred — all of them evil, all of them wrong.

For all the oppression and all the injustice...We apologize God, and ask for forgiveness from you and from all people of colour.

For the denial of human and civil rights, for inequities in criminal justice, for instances of police brutality, for the denial of opportunity, for economic injustice, for all ways that racism has fostered these wrongs...

We apologize and ask God and all people of colour to forgive us.

With this prayer we acknowledge the beauty and genius of your culture, the power and genius of those who came before you, of your children and all your descendants. With this prayer we pray that you, your children, and especially your men be blessed and protected.

May your men be blessed and protected.

May your young men be blessed and protected.

May all your men, women and children be surrounded by angels at this time.

Dear God, we pray that a great healing may occur.
We place in your hands the relationship between black and white people.
May we be lifted high above the walls that divide us.
May our hearts be awakened to our truth of our oneness.
May racism and prejudice be no more.
May they dissolve in the presence of Your Love Lord.
Please come upon us and heal our hearts.

We pray with admiration and with honour to all the grandparents, and their grandparents before them, and their grandparents before them - for their strength and ability to survive in an oppressive world. Their survival was and is truly admirable and praise-worthy!

May the screams that were not allowed, be allowed now.
May the cries that were never heard be heard now.
May the tears that were never seen be seen now.
And may the healing begin.

Almighty God, source of true justice and peace,
in You there is no distinction of persons,
for in you we are equally loved.
Reconcile us that we may live and work with each other and with you to
establish your Kingdom on earth where there is no poverty, war, any
oppression or racism.

May the healing begin.
May the Light of love now heal us all.
Amen

It occurs to me that we give little thought to the actual appearance of the people we revere in scripture and our saints, many of whom are People of Colour. The colour of their skin has no bearing on the reverence we give to them or the message and teaching they share with us. We need to be sure that this is the way we live with all people.

I went looking for a recording of "Let There Be Peace on Earth and Let It Begin With Me" and found this one which is even more inspiring than what I was looking for because of its timeliness.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ITXaL2Sk2A>

By the way, I just read an email which announced that we have surpassed our goal in the 24-hour fast to raise money for the HCCEF: way to go!

The Spirit is a'movin' – let's keep the energy flowing!

With every blessing, Gillian

