



Prayer of the Assumption Community for Racial Healing

Friday, June 5, 2020, 7 p.m.

Chapel of the Holy Spirit

Pastoral Reflection - Deacon Paul Covino

When asked in this Gospel reading, "Who is my neighbor?," Jesus is ready, answering with a parable. Jesus often used parables to shed light, bring new insights, and provoke a change in the hearts of listeners. We hear that someone is robbed, beaten and injured. Two walked by, ignoring the injured man, but a third came to the man's aid, caring for his wounds and securing him safe lodging. He was the good neighbor. He was acting like Jesus, doing what God required.

Keeping this parable in mind, consider the scenario we in the Assumption community are witnessing today as our nation mourns the death of George Floyd and other men and women of color. Too many walk by the victims of racism without looking deeply at their wounds or the pain inflicted on them. Many of these wounds have festered over centuries. Today's continuing disparities in education, housing, employment, economic well-being, and leadership are not disconnected from our country's shameful history of slavery and systemic racism. Any act of racism injures the victim and the perpetrator, threatening the dignity of both. The failure to act to end systemic racism, which is often animated in our laws, policies, and structures, hurts those who are victimized and denies all of us the opportunity to benefit from the gifts of diversity.

Jesus' parable calls us to our obligations as Christians, to be a good neighbor: the one who stops and helps the injured; the one who does not hesitate to accept the responsibility of healing. The signs of this time are asking us to wake up, to stand up and to speak up when we see racism. This is how we love our neighbor as ourselves. This is how we act like Jesus. This is how we do justice and love goodness. This is how we make safe lodging for all. This is how we begin the healing from racism in our land, writing a new parable of racial justice for this time.

The Catholic tradition that animates Assumption College is clear in its condemnation of racism. In their pastoral letter on racism, the Catholic bishops of the United States teach: "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" [3]. Following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, the bishops who chair major committees for the conference of bishops wrote: "We are broken-hearted, sickened, and outraged to watch another video of an African American man being killed before our very eyes. What's more astounding is that this is happening within mere weeks of several other such occurrences. This is the latest wake-up call that needs to be answered by each of us in a spirit of determined conversion.

Racism is not a thing of the past or simply a throwaway political issue to be bandied about when convenient. It is a real and present danger that must be met head on. As members of the Church, we must stand for the more difficult right and just actions instead of the easy wrongs of indifference. We cannot turn a blind eye to these atrocities and yet still try to profess to respect every human life. We serve a God of love, mercy, and justice” [4].

The sin of racism is evil and needs to be wiped out. Too many times, miseducation has blocked the path to racial healing. Too many times, apathy has hindered the road to racial healing. In a community dedicated to learning and faith, we at Assumption are called to attend to the wounds of racism with education, prayer and action—to move out of pain to healing by transforming systems and structures that perpetuate injustice. We must recognize that we can all do something about racism.