

Glory to Jesus Christ!

Dear Fathers, Deacons, Monastics and Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

We are just concluding the great and holy liturgical seasons of the Great Fast (Lent), Pascha (Easter), Ascension and Pentecost that have been celebrated with the Covid-19 pandemic. It has been a trying time for all of us with restrictions and various safeguards proposed in the various states where we have our parishes that have limited our attendance of coming to church for the various church services.

Now as we conclude the Pentecostal cycle, there are protests and riots in our nation triggered by the brutal death of Mr. George Floyd. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, at his Wednesday June 3rd General Audience had these words for us:

Dear brothers and sisters in the United States, I have witnessed with great concern the disturbing social unrest in your nation in these past days, following the tragic death of Mr. George Floyd.

My friends 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".

Today I join the Church in St. Paul and Minneapolis, and in the entire United States, in praying for the repose of the soul of George Floyd and of all those others who have lost their lives as a result of the sin of racism. Let us pray for the consolation of their grieving families and friends and let us implore the national reconciliation and peace for which we yearn. May Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of America, intercede for all those who work for peace and justice in your land and throughout the world.

May God bless all of you and your families.

These are comforting, challenging and compassionate words from Pope Francis. He reminds us that "the sin of racism" is a terrible virus that can only be cured and healed by our own individual inner conversion of our minds and hearts with God's grace. Civil rights' laws and policy adjustments as important as they are will only be a temporary fix unless we ask the Holy Spirit to kick-start in us and our country an inner cleansing of the insidious sin/virus of racism.

What can you and I do about this? In preparation for the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul beginning on June 8th there is the Apostles' Fast. It isn't as strict as the Great Fast and usually isn't observed. Why not do some extra prayer and fasting during this time for ourselves and our country. Read the Old Testament Book of Jonah (4 short chapters) and adapt it for us in the 21st century. Let us pray to the Holy Spirit as we have been praying for those afflicted with the corona virus and all the medical staff these past months - let us pray for national reconciliation and peace in our nation.

Finally, let us pray and support one another in this pandemic and turbulent time of the 21st century.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Bishop John Pzak, C.Ss.R.