



*"We must discover the power of love, the redemptive power of love. And when we do that, we will make of this old world a new world, for love is the only way." – Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

The death this week of George Floyd, which follows other race-based incidents of violence and xenophobia, has raised once again the dual specters of racism and hatred that still remain a part of our nation's "normal."

The timing of this tragedy is particularly impactful. Throughout the experience of a shared global pandemic, there may have been an underlying grace, a tiny spark of hope in the power of love. Over the past weeks of quarantine and isolation we realized our need for each other and our shared vulnerability as brothers and sisters in the human family.

Now we find ourselves confronting yet another tragic death while our nation already mourns the nearly 100,000 sisters, brothers, loved ones, neighbors and friends that have been taken from us. As our country begins to gradually reopen, and people yearn for things to get back to normal – we have reopened our nation's deeper sicknesses and wounds – those of injustice, inequality, apathy and corruption.

We are a community that believes in the power of love and the inherent dignity of every person. Along with Christians throughout the world we are preparing this Sunday to receive anew the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, praying that the fire of divine love will be in our world, starting in our own hearts. It is true that many of us are privileged in that we can run our errands and go about our lives without the lingering fear of deadly violence simply because of the color of our skin. Even more, we must pray for the Holy Spirit to come anew into our hearts and help us embrace the dignity of every person regardless of race, creed and tongue. That love must move us not only with righteous anger, but to prophetically call out injustice in all its ugly forms – especially when it manifests as aggression against the dignity of the human person. We must be converted ourselves and take a stand, even if that means courageously breaking out of the locked rooms we sometimes too comfortably hide in, and then speaking new languages in order to bear witness to the power of God's love renewing the face of the earth. Now is the time to open our mouths for the sake of justice for our brothers and sisters.

In the introduction to their document: *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love – A Pastoral Letter Against Racism*, the US Bishops write:

Holy Scripture boldly proclaims, "See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are" (1 Jn 3:1). This love "comes from God and unites us to God; through this unifying process it makes us a 'we' which transcends our divisions and

makes us one, until in the end God is ‘all in all’ (1 Cor 15:28).” By the work of the Holy Spirit, the Church is called to share with all the world this gift of love. As Pope Francis points out, “The salvation which God has wrought, and the Church joyfully proclaims, is for everyone. God has found a way to unite himself to every human being in every age.” Through his Cross and Resurrection, Christ united the one human race to the Father. However, even though Christ’s victory over sin and death is complete, we still live in a world affected by them. We want to address one particularly destructive and persistent form of evil. Despite many promising strides made in our country, racism still infects our nation. (<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/racism/upload/open-wide-our-hearts.pdf>.)

It is striking how the words of this document – and the circumstances that inspired it – are just as relevant today as they were in November 2018.

Let’s continue to pray for each other throughout this time as we discern together the ways by which the Holy Spirit is moving each of us individually and communally as the Body of Christ here at STM and throughout the world, to ongoing conversion and to bear witness to the triumph of Christ’s love over death and sin in this critical moment in our shared history.

Please know that the chaplains are available should anyone wish to talk.

Peace in Christ,

*The STM Chaplains*