

“Mama, mama...I can’t breathe...” These horrifying and heartbreaking words of George Floyd as he was being killed by a white Minneapolis police officer, with the support and protection of three others, remind us once more of the terrible reality of racism that sadly persists not only in police departments but throughout our society, because it persists in human hearts and minds. As such, his killing reminds us of the urgent and way-long-overdue need for conversion of hearts, enlightening of minds, and reform of institutions from this deadly sin and its insidious effects. This is especially true for us as people of faith in Jesus Christ and his gospel of God’s eternal life and love for all. As Pope Francis himself reminded us in his Wednesday audience after the killing of 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.” On this feast of the Body and Blood of Christ we could add that we cannot worship his body and blood in the Eucharist yet tolerate or turn a blind eye to his suffering body and shed blood in victims of racial hatred and violence, or remain indifferent to their struggle for justice. According to our Lord himself, in his final parable about the final judgment in the Gospel of Matthew, whatever we do or don’t do for the most disadvantaged or least powerful (the “least”) of our brothers and sisters, like victims of racial hatred, injustice, and violence in our day, we do or don’t do for him (Mt 25:31-46).

For more information on our church’s teaching on the sin of racism, of which unfortunately many Catholics are unaware, including the bishops’ 2018 pastoral letter against racism, *Open Wide Your Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love*, and Statements in response to the killing of George Floyd, I would recommend visiting the website of the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB) at:

<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/racism/>. One of those Statements is by the Chairmen of seven different committees of the USCCB, and speaks to what the horrible tragedy of George Floyd’s killing, along with that of too many other victims of racial violence in our country and throughout its history, should mean for us as Catholics:

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.

On this Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, let us ask him to help us honor him in all our brothers and sisters by overcoming the sin of racism in our hearts and nation, asking the help of our blessed Mother in this prayer to overcome racism from our bishops:

Mary, friend and mother to all, through your Son, God has found a way to unite himself to every human being, called to be one people, sisters and brothers to each other.

We ask for your help in calling on your Son, seeking forgiveness for the times when we have failed to love and respect one another.

We ask for your help in obtaining from your Son the grace we need to overcome the evil of racism and to build a just society.

We ask for your help in following your Son, so that prejudice and animosity will no longer infect our minds or hearts but will be replaced with a love that respects the dignity of each person.

Mother of the Church, the Spirit of your Son Jesus warms our hearts: pray for us.

Amen.