

## St. Lawrence Statement on Racism

My Dear Friends of St. Lawrence Church,

May God bless you!

As if our current pandemic was not enough to bring heartache and despair to our beloved country, we now know that much to our dismay, the recent events surrounding the unjust murder of Mr. George Floyd has come to the forefront of issues plaguing our nation. As we all know, this was a horrendous hate crime perpetrated by a very corrupt and racist officer of the law. The media has asked that faith leaders speak out about this horrific injustice, so it sadly falls upon me to offer my commentary. I do not wish to insult the intelligence of any of you, because it's evident that we, as a collective community of faith, denounce and condemn this evil act of murder and criminal misconduct.

**FIRST:** Unfortunately, in recent years (and not so recent), the behavior of a select group of Catholic Priests has brought disgrace and shame to the Catholic Church for inexcusable crimes of sexual deviance and reprehensible actions centered around minors and vulnerable parishioners. As a result of these atrocities and abominations, the media has portrayed all Catholic Priests as pedophiles and sick perverts. One has only to watch comedians mock and chastise the Catholic clergy to grasp the full impact of how the sins of a few have tainted and ruined the good reputation of all. I completely understand that it's a natural and human response to brand all Catholic Priests as criminals who are guilty of sexual misbehavior. I must confess that if I myself were not a faithful Catholic, I would subscribe wholeheartedly to these very same sentiments. However, given that I am a Catholic Priest, I know better. I know that for every bad Priest in the world, there are *at least* 99 others who are trying their **very** best to bring Jesus to others in ways that are holy, wholesome and respectable. It is so true that the sins or crimes of one can bring dishonor and disruption to all. Yet we, as Catholics know all of this already, which is why we continue to place our immortal souls in the hands of Holy Mother Church and Her Priests. Why? Because we are a people of reason ... and as stated above, we know better.

**SECOND:** The same principle must be applied to our brave men and women in law enforcement. While there are 'bad apples' out there who are abusing their authority as officers of the law, there remains an **overwhelming** team of law enforcement officers who are good, honest, compassionate and trustworthy. Again, for every disgraceful police officer out there, there remain *at least* 99 others who are conducting themselves with integrity, moral distinction and fidelity. For this, we owe them our utmost respect and consideration for the many, many sacrifices they make on a daily basis for our safety and well being. Believe me, I would know, for it was my very own father who dedicated his life to serving the great citizens of the United States as an officer of law enforcement, and he was a tremendous and outstanding human being (like MOST of our police officers are)!

Every single facet of society has corruption - whether they reside in the medical, corporate, law, finance, political, entertainment, athletic (and the list goes on and on) profession(s), there will always be shady characters of suspicious and highly questionable moral conduct. The temptation is for us to generalize, brand and dismiss the aforementioned professions because of the ill-repute of a select few. Sadly, it only takes the eye-drop of a single ounce of ink to taint an entire well of purified water.

There is much more I would like to add to this message, but I feel as though I'm "preaching to the choir" - otherwise none of you would even bother coming to church, right? ALL of you - my good friends of St. Lawrence Church, are people of upstanding moral conduct who possess the highest of virtues. While we are far from perfect, we embrace Our Beloved Savior, Jesus Christ in whom we have been redeemed, and in Whose example of goodness we structure our lives accordingly. Please, in the Holy Name of God Almighty, continue to walk the walk of faith, peace, mercy and love. May God bless you, and Mary keep you.

I leave all of you with a rather lengthy perspective on behalf of my dear mother, Lydia. She was a victim of rather harsh racial discrimination while growing up as a poor (immigrant) Puerto Rican in a predominantly Irish neighborhood in a 1950's and 60's Manhattan neighborhood. She was subject to countless ethnic and insensitive slurs and outright discrimination because of her Latina heritage. She did not ask for me to share her thoughts with you and I am sharing this with all of you without her permission ... but I honestly don't care (there are no legal ramifications here). She wrote this as she saw the unfolding of the George Floyd incident/tragedy on television and it may give just a little bit of credence to everything I've just written (as her son) - well, perhaps it will and perhaps it won't, but I'll allow you to judge. Again, she has no knowledge of the fact that I share her thoughts with you ...(because they were meant for me, and me alone).

Thank you SO much for taking the time to read this lengthy message, and may Jesus restore peace and harmony to our troubled world ... God bless you :))

Lydia Fuchs (my mother):

"What is racism? I believe it is an evil which has permeated through every facet of our society fueled from generation to generation. One cannot define it as just a hate or intolerance for black people. In my opinion, racism is a hatred, a feeling of supremacy over those who are different than we. One could argue that it is bullying - destroying or attacking another person because they may not like the way that person looks, the way they act, the way they speak, who they hang out with, their religious beliefs, their sexual orientation, their gender, their political affiliation, their cultural background and the list goes on. It is a feeling of superiority, a hubris that we are better than those whom we perceive to be unworthy of the same rights as we have. One could further argue that at some time in our lives we all have been a victim of racism, a victim of bullying either in school, our workplace, our neighborhoods, etc. One does not have to be black to experience racism or bullying because, unfortunately, racism is ubiquitous in our society, and is disguised in many ways.

Is it a learned behavior. I believe it is. If we observe the behavior of small children, they embrace all. They see all they come in contact with as equal to themselves. That is the beauty and the innocence of children and why we should be more like them. As children grow older they observe and become influenced by behavior and language of not only their parents and siblings, by what they see and hear outside their family surroundings. Television, books, games and Hollywood play a paramount role in the development of our young ones. And, sadly, as children begin to go to school and socialize with others, eventually, they too endure a bitter taste of racism/bullying in some form or another. Their innocent and beautiful behavior gradually diminishes as the evil of racism slowly evolves and the ugliness, the cruelty and the destruction of racism takes hold.

How will we ever rid ourselves of this evil? I believe parents, grandparents, families, teachers and society as a whole have a tremendous responsibility, a huge burden to be vigilant of our young children and constantly reinforce love and respect for others whom they may perceive to be different than they are and encourage them to be compassionate and understanding and; very important, tolerant of those different than they. I believe if we plant these seeds early on in our young, there is hope of some day eradicating the evils of racism and creating that generation which God intended for us. We as adults should look within ourselves and ask ourselves: are we a part of that evil mentality that contributes to, or perpetuates the evils of racism? Let us try to see the beauty in all we come in contact with. Let us be blind to color, let us be tolerant of those whom we perceive to be different than we are and instead embrace each other and honor God's second commandment to "love one another as I have loved you". Let us remind ourselves that we are all brothers and sisters made in the image of God." - Lydia Fuchs