

A Declaration Against Racism

by the Parishes of St. Charles Borromeo-Resurrection-All Saints, St. Mark the Evangelist, St. Aloysius, St. Joseph of the Holy Family in Harlem, NY; The Parishes of Corpus Christi, Holy Cross-St. John the Baptist, St. Francis de Sales, St. Francis Xavier and St. Catherine of Genoa in Manhattan, NY; The Parishes of St. Augustine-Our Lady of Victory, Our Lady of the Angels, St. Benedict, St. Simon Stock-St. Joseph in Bronx, NY; The Parish of St. Paul in Bullville, NY; the Parish of St. Katherine Drexel in Boston, MA; The Parish of St. Benedict the Black in Chicago, IL; The Parish of St. Patrick in Oakland, CA; the Parish of St. Gabriel the Archangel in New Orleans, LA

by The Franciscan Handmaids of the Most Pure Heart of Mary-Harlem; The Congregation of Christian Brothers-Rice Community-Bronx, Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary-Eastern American Province; The Sisters of the Holy Family-New Orleans;

by St. John's University-Queens; St. Augustine High School-New Orleans

by Pax Christi-USA; Pax Christi-Maryknoll in Ossining, NY;

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Edmund Burke, 18th Century Irish legislator and defender of American and Catholic liberty, argued that "when bad men combine, the good must associate; else they will fall one by one, an unpitied sacrifice in a contemptible struggle." In that spirit, for the preservation of our own future, we gather our intentions together as Catholics in the Archdiocese of New York against the evil of organized and extreme efforts to advance racist positions in our national conversation on race and culture. In the following declaration we Catholics in America, members of parishes, academies and societies in the Archdiocese of New York, the Archdiocese of Chicago and the Diocese of Oakland, stand together against White Supremacists, Neo-Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan.

What We Believe

Jesus's teaching on the two greatest commandments is clear and unequivocal: "‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments depends the whole Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:37-40)

As Catholics of all ethnicities and cultures in America, we strive to follow this law, in word and in deed. For scripture teaches, "What use is it, if someone says they have faith, but they have no works? Can that faith save them?" (James 2:14-16). Being faithful to the commands of God, we must work to address the racism that will otherwise lead to our spiritual destruction. If every man, woman, and child is our neighbor, we are equal with all persons.

The U.S. Catholic bishops denounced racism as a 'radical evil.' (USCCB, "Brothers and Sisters to Us", 1979). With our words and deeds, we must speak truth to power within our nation and within our Church, to expose the radical evil of racism. Our hesitancy to address racism with one voice will show complicity with racism's evil presence.

What We Have Seen

In recent years and even weeks we have witnessed and heard much that give us, as Catholics in America, serious cause to be concerned about our country and our future. We have seen hard fought civil and human rights seemingly put in serious jeopardy. Many of those struggles of the past against racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia resulted in great loss of life, and revealed brutality in all forms. These past struggles, which have not yet brought victory, involved peoples of all ages, ethnicities, and faiths sitting down and standing-up for the rights of others to be free and treated justly; for the belief that all men and women are created equal, in the image and likeness of God.

In 2015 we witnessed, at one of the nation's oldest black churches, Emanuel A.M.E., in Charleston, SC, nine people of faith, including the senior pastor, being fatally shot while in prayer—shot by a young white man, a welcomed stranger in their midst, who wanted to start a race war against blacks. More recently, we have seen people allied against intolerance, in Charlottesville, VA, attacked by a moving vehicle—a car driven by a young white man seemingly motivated by hate. A young white woman, protesting hatred, was killed and several others were seriously injured in this incident. Two law enforcement officers also lost their lives while trying to monitor the Charlottesville events; and a young black man was severely beaten by white supremacists, as no one came to his aid.

In between the above-mentioned acts of violence in South Carolina and Virginia, we have witnessed over the years other acts of racism, anti-Semitism, discrimination and hate in our communities, at our schools, in our public spaces and before places of worship across this country. The hoods of the Ku Klux Klan have, in some cases, been replaced by the emboldened, unhooded, public and youthful faces of proponents of hate today. The intimidating messages of hate in the past, scrolled on homes and houses of worship, have been partially replaced by the emboldened selfies and social media postings of those “proudly” communicating messages of hate—many of which demonstrate the troubling, youthful face of intolerance today. All of this begs the question of what will we do as Catholics in America; what are we willing to stand up for.

What We Declare

We are thus resolved that there can be no acceptance of the moral positions regarding race, faith and culture espoused by White Supremacists, Neo-Nazis, the Ku Klux Klan and similar groups which advocate for the superiority of white persons and the inferiority of persons of color or for the superiority of Christians and the inferiority of non-Christians. We declare that these groups, by virtue of their moral positions, are anti-Catholic, anti-Christian and that they act against the ideals articulated in the foundational and governing documents of the United States. There can be no acceptance of these racist, xenophobic, intolerant positions within the Catholic community in America.