



ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON

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NEWS RELEASE

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Archbishop Wilton Gregory Issues Statement on Planned Presidential Visit

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Here is a statement from Washington Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory regarding the planned visit today from the president at the Saint John Paul II National Shrine:

I find it baffling and reprehensible that any Catholic facility would allow itself to be so egregiously misused and manipulated in a fashion that violates our religious principles, which call us to defend the rights of all people even those with whom we might disagree. Saint Pope John Paul II was an ardent defender of the rights and dignity of human beings. His legacy bears vivid witness to that truth. He certainly would not condone the use of tear gas and other deterrents to silence, scatter or intimidate them for a photo opportunity in front of a place of worship and peace.

Archbishop Gregory will participate in an Online Dialogue with the Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life at Georgetown University this Friday, June 5, from 12 noon - 1 p.m. EDT to discuss “Racism in Our Streets and Structures - A Test of Faith, A Crisis for Our Nation.”

More detailed information and registration for this Zoom discussion here:

<https://catholicsocialthought.georgetown.edu/events/racism-in-our-streets-and-structures>

On Sunday, May 31, Washington Archbishop Wilton Gregory released this statement on the Memorial Day death of George Floyd:

In astonishment, we are seeing the reactions of people across the United States as they express feelings of frustration, hurt, and anger in their cry for justice for George Floyd, whom we painfully watched being suffocated in front of our eyes on video in Minneapolis, Minnesota this past week.

Many of us remember similar incidents in our history that accompanied the Civil Rights Movement, where we repeatedly saw Black Americans viciously brutalized by police on television and in newspaper photos. Those historic moments helped to rouse our national conscience to the African American experience in the United States and now, in 2020, we tragically still see repeated incidents of police brutality against African Americans. We find ourselves in this national moment again with the awakening of our conscience by heartbreaking photos and video that clearly confirm that racism still endures in our country. On television and in social media, we are observing an overflow of pain felt acutely in the African American community and shared by too many other communities.

Moments like this cause people of good will, who believe in the value, respect and dignity of every human life, to wonder if and how we can move on from here. The horror of George Floyd's death, like all acts of racism, hurts all of us in the Body of Christ since we are each made in the image and likeness of God, and deserve the dignity that comes with that existence.

This incident reveals the virus of racism among us once again even as we continue to cope with the coronavirus pandemic. [Statement on the fatal shooting of Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia](#)

We owe immense appreciation to our first responders who are currently working tirelessly to care for us and keep us safe. We remain grateful to them for their commitment to serve our community by protecting and saving lives.

However, as a society, must find ways to understand and to respond to the pain of our brothers and sisters. We see racism destroying the lives of Jewish, Muslim, and Christian people because of their religious and ethnic heritages. Racism triggers the divisive and xenophobic attitudes of nationalism. It also targets people because of their cultural traditions or physical appearances and it threatens immigrant people who seek nothing more than the opportunity to improve their lives and the lives of their children.

We must non-violently and constructively work together to heal and build the "Beloved Community" that was spoken about by the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

On this Pentecost weekend, I join my brother bishops throughout our nation, and especially Archbishop Hebda of St. Paul and Minneapolis, in calling on the Holy Spirit in the most urgent way. We must examine our own attitudes and actions in order to seek conversion from sin and turn our hearts towards Christ in order to end personal and structural racism. Now, and every day, we must pray to find the strength to do what is right and just as we encounter our neighbors from a culture, country, religion, race, or experience different than our own and see in them God's creative design.

This moment calls us to be the Church of hope that Jesus Christ created us to be in a world full of pain and despair.

We pray for a new Pentecost: a renewal of love, justice and truth in our hearts. We are called to do justice and love goodness in order to walk humbly with God.

Since we are confident that the Father always hears our prayer for reconciliation, together, we join in peaceful, non-violent protest, action, and prayer for the balm to cure all forms of racism starting today.

Please join me in asking Our Father for the balm of love, justice, peace, compassion and mercy to end racism and hatred now. Come, Holy Spirit, Come.

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The Archdiocese of Washington is home to over 655,000 Catholics, 139 parishes and 93 Catholic schools, located in Washington, D.C., and five Maryland counties: Calvert, Charles, Montgomery, Prince George's and St. Mary's.