



DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH
THE BISHOP'S OFFICE



Pastoral Letter

To All Priests, Deacons, Seminarians, Religious Men and Women, and Faithful Laity of the Diocese of Fort Worth

June 13, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

"The Church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against men and women or harassment of them because of their race, color, condition of life, or religion." These words, written at the Second Vatican Council in the Declaration entitled, *Nostra Aetate*, articulate concisely the teaching of the Church against the sin of racism in conformity with the heart and mind of Jesus Christ. It is the heart and mind of Christ that must always be at the forefront of our discernment and consideration of all matters involving the morality of our relationships with other human beings and the laws and structures that safeguard and govern these relationships. Faith and right reason anchor our discernment in the light of the Truth that proclaims our dignity as human beings created in the image and likeness of God.

The rule of law and its just promulgation and enforcement by well-formed police and civil servants are required and necessary to safeguard the rights of people and for the peaceful settlement of disagreements and for an adequate care of genuine public peace. We cannot stand against the sin of racism, or any other social evil, without the just rule of law and its humane and measured enforcement by the police entrusted with this great responsibility. This requires transparent protocols and practices that foster the accountability and public trust especially with those who in our history have been most alienated by acts of racism intensified by the experience of poverty. It further requires the social support for those who generously place themselves in harm's way and for their formation as first responders to serve and protect our social order and peace especially mindful of those most vulnerable to harm by an abuse of power.

We are each and all children of the one true and living God. During these times of pandemic and social unrest, we are tempted to fear and to act irrationally and unjustly, controlled by the false gods and idols that incite us to reject God and to harm our neighbor either through violence or indifference to the plight of the poor and disenfranchised. As I stated in my homily at the Mass offered for the repose of the soul of George Floyd and for peace and an end to civil discord, "Justice is the need and responsibility of everyone. Peace is the need and responsibility of everyone. We can only achieve them if we work towards them together and we cannot achieve them without recognizing that justice and peace come from God and we need Him."

Let us pray together for justice and peace that can only come about if we rely on the help of God and call on His name. I remain,

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

+ Michael F. Olson

Most Reverend Michael F. Olson, STD, MA
Bishop of Fort Worth