



Diocese of Austin

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Office of the Bishop

COMMEMORATION OF JUNETEENTH AS A FEDERAL HOLIDAY

June 18, 2021

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Juneteenth, probably the oldest known Black American celebration in the United States, commemorates June 19, 1865, the day Black Americans in Texas first learned of their freedom from slavery — almost two and a half years after President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. The painful legacy of slavery and history of segregation continues to inflict pain on the Black community. Now that our nation will recognize Juneteenth as a federal holiday, I encourage our families to use this opportunity to learn about and reflect on our collective history, taking the time to pray for meaningful change in how we encounter and see our brothers and sisters as created in God's image.

May Juneteenth honor not only the many lives lost in the fight for freedom and full emancipation, but also recognize the generations of Black Americans who trace their lineage to the enslaved and sometimes still suffer from the effects of racism and racist ideology. As people of faith, this moment in history fills us with hope for a better future where the promise of liberty, equality and justice for all is realized.

Please join me in praying that this holiday will offer hope for a future where all people will work to bring about the needed transformation of our understanding of true life, charity, and justice in the United States of America.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Joe S. Vasquez
Bishop of Austin