

**Casey Goodson Jr.**

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent (Year B)

December 13, 2020

Fr. Tony Davis

At noon on Friday, December 4, our neighborhood experienced an unfortunate tragedy that resulted in the killing of our neighbor, Casey Goodson. For those who follow the local and even national news, you may have heard the story. Without getting into the details, whether we like it or not, all the unrest that we remember from this summer is becoming very real for us here. This puts us in a very uncomfortable position, both geographically and spiritually.

Over the decades this neighborhood has changed greatly. For our parishioners who have been here for many years, you have seen the changes and have graciously continued to attend and support the parish. Our church itself has been able to remain very stable and largely unchanged. Today, with the killing of Casey so close to our church, we are at a new moment in our parish history. Will we allow this experience to change us? Will we be too embarrassed to worship God here in this neighborhood of diversity and now killings? Should we stay silent and just focus on our own salvation? These are difficult questions that are geographically imposed upon us.

One of the Advent titles of Christ is the Prince of Peace. All of us are called to peace and non-violence by our Christian faith. To be consistent in our message and practice of peace can make us spiritually uncomfortable since it is much easier to act out of anger towards those who do not see things as we see them. This past summer, we were quick to call for peaceful protests throughout our country and city- and

rightfully so. With this tragedy, however, we are reminded that those who have authority, influence, or power also are called to try to use peaceful and non-violent means to bring about law and order. While this isn't always possible, we have to believe that situations like this could have been avoided.

As a multi-ethnic Catholic Community here at St. Matthias, we are in a difficult spot. What is needed now from us is solidarity with this community and this neighborhood.

In his latest document *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis says that “solidarity means much more than engaging in sporadic acts of generosity. It means thinking and acting in terms of community.” (116) In other words, solidarity isn't just about doing charity to help the less fortunate, but about becoming less fortunate ourselves and giving up some of our privilege so that we can experience life from the underside alongside the people God has placed in our lives. That where the power of the community resides.

Like the prophet Isaiah in our First Reading, let us make it our mission “to bring glad tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners” by standing in solidarity with those who are mourning. Let us make our prayer the prayer of the final verse of the popular Advent song ‘O Come, O Come Emmanuel:’ “O come, desire of nations, bind in one the hearts of all humankind; Bid thou our sad divisions cease, and be thyself our Prince of Peace.”