

Statement from the of the National Association of Black Catholic Deacons

At this moment in time and in this year of 2020, it is most critical that we, African American Catholic Christians, clergy, religious and parishioners address the sin of racism that is destroying communities and families of color around the nation.

If the most recent pastoral letter on racism, “Open Wide Our Hearts,” written by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, is to have any moral legitimacy, then all of us, our Black Catholic leaders, clergy, religious and parishioners must do more than just pray; we must address the sin of racism.

The fact that we, all of us, were created in the image of God should remind us that each person is a living expression of God that must be **respected and preserved and never dishonored.**

The incident in Minnesota, with the killing of George Floyd, on Monday, May 25, 2020 was very traumatic and disturbing. Incidences such as the one in West Baltimore involving Freddie Gray, in Ferguson, Mo. involving Michael Brown and in Northern California involving Oscar Grant are just a few examples of incidences between police officers and Black men that were also traumatic and resulted in the deaths of these unarmed Black men.

Although these deaths are tragic, they are symptomatic and they expose a deep-seated connection between institutional racism and the continued erosion of the sanctity of life; also, the connection between acceptance and justification for taking the life of unarmed Black men.

These deaths defy the fundamental principle of justice, every belief in dignity and the fact that all of our lives are connected. As human beings, we are responsible for each other.

The Seattle Police Chief Carmen Best, mentioned in her statement to the Seattle Police Department, “policing is an honorable profession filled with honorable public servants, committed to protecting life and serving the community.”

Also, Chief Best pointed out to her officers if you see a coworker doing something that is unsafe, out of policy, unacceptable and illegal we need to act. If someone’s life is unnecessarily in danger it is your responsibility to intervene. ([Chief Best’s Statement to Officers Regarding George Floyd, Written by Chief Carmen Best on May 27, 2020.](#))

As Catholics, we are called to the same standards of behavior. We cannot stand by and not respond to incidents of racism and inhuman treatment of our Black brothers and sisters.

First, we must pray. Read and reflect on 1 Corinthians 12, which tells us that despite our diversity: all are gifts of God, grace from outside ourselves; all are forms of service, an expression of purpose and effect; and all are workings, in which God is at work.

As Black deacons, our task as preachers is to expose and name conflicts that go against the teachings of scripture; to preach about social justice and our responsibility to seek justice; and to speak against the sin of racism. We must encourage our brother clergy, Bishops and priest, to do the same.

We must not pass up an opportunity to address a sin that permeates the everyday existence of Black people.

To help in our preaching opportunity, a book titled “The Red Record - Alledged Causes of Lynching” written by Ida B. Wells in 1895 can be one reference guide. By replacing the word “lynching” with “killing of unarmed Black men” the information in this book seems like it was written in the year 2020.

We, Black Catholic deacons, using information in the book, and data regarding killings of Black men in the United States and other information, can be a voice for justice and peace. We can be instrumental in having churches, and all Christian societies create resolutions that

- call for an investigation into this historical pattern of killing unarmed Black men and the unlawful attacks on accused persons that deny them due process of law.
- condemn the killing of unarmed Black men and protest every time a killing takes place; and send the resolutions to the local authorities where these killings occur.
- ask that the justice system uses the same investigation, litigation and punishment for law officers who unnecessarily take the like of an unarmed person
- require National, State and Local government make laws that help discourage the devaluing of the lives of Black men and ask that commissions be organized to address and prevent this injustice in the taking of the lives of unarmed Black Men.

My brother Deacons it is time for us to not only pray, but act and show our solidarity towards action to eradicate this horrible sin. Peace!

Deacon Joseph Connor
President of NABCD