

## **HOMILY by DCN. ALBERT ANDERSON, PENTECOST SUNDAY, Alexandria, VA**

If the Pentecost of the Acts of the Apostles were to occur today, maybe instead of Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, Mesopotamians, Judeans and Cappadocians, we would see African-Americans, Indigenous Americans; Nigerians, and Ghanaians; Salvadorians, Mexicans and Hondurans; Filipinos, Koreans, Japanese; Englishmen, Italians, Swedes and Germans; Black, white, Brown. Get the picture?...all coming together embracing the Gospel as many parts of the one Body of Christ. My sisters and brothers, that is **exactly** the **unity** to which we are being called.

Listen, I know can be hard to stay united, especially when the way of the world tries its best to drive us apart. Right here in the **UNITED** States of America there is a deadly virus that continues to separate us, to make us distant from each other, and I am NOT talking about the coronavirus. Over the years since our country's inception, from the time of enslavement, through Jim Crow laws, lynching, mass incarceration, the Tuskegee syphilis experiment, the massacre at Mother Emmanuel Church, Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Sandra Bland, Tamir Rice, Sean Bell, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and so so many more, the suffering and death toll from this virus continues to grow. Just a few short days ago, I and the world watched the video as this virus claimed yet another life. We watched as George Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man, lay face down on the pavement, hands cuffed behind his back, completely subdued, bleeding from the nose and begging for his life as a white policeman knelt down on his neck. We watched as he struggled to breathe, pleading for his life, calling for his mamma, until finally, he stopped moving, his breath was taken from him and he was gone!

Over the past three months, more than 100,000 people have died in the U.S. from COVID-19. Due to the virus within that virus, a disproportionate number of Black and Brown folks were infected and died from the disease. While governments and health agencies around the world are scrambling to find a vaccine for the deadly coronavirus, the cure for the deadly **virus of racism** is right in front of us and yet, so many of us refuse to take the it. Yes, it can be painful. It can be hard to let go of preconceived ideas, ingrained from childhood, about superiority; to come to grips with the reality that if you think you are superior, that means you see another human being, another beloved child of God, created in His image and likeness, as somehow inferior. But, even if that air of superiority is eventually stripped away, the virus of racism is so insidious that many people are walking around thinking that they are asymptomatic! Thinking they do not need a cure; that there is not a racist bone in their bodies, while simultaneously taking advantage of the benefits of privilege; privilege gained at the cost of oppression. Yes, it can be painful. It can be painful to get out of one's comfort zone. But, as Dr. King reminded us all: ***"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where***

*he stands at times of challenge and controversy."* These are times of challenge and controversy! We are being challenged by God Himself, to see if we get it; to see whether we understand the message of the Gospel!

My dear brothers and sisters, the same Holy Spirit that Jesus breathed into the Apostles in that upper room on resurrection day was breathed into each of us at our baptism and confirmation. Do not let the virus choke your **soul's** breadth away to the point that the Spirit within you cries out "**I CAN'T BREATHE**"!!! And you know exactly what I'm talking about! We ALL have to stand up against this evil virus. To my sisters and brothers giving witness in the streets, thank you! To those of us who feel our voice will not be heard except through destruction of property, I understand your anger, your grief, your frustration; I feel it too! But there is a better way to further the cause. It seems that there are also pretenders among us, seeking to infiltrate our public witness for nefarious purposes. To you, be you white supremacists, anarchist, or whatever, you cannot hide forever! The light of truth will eventually shine on you too!

But, take courage my sisters and brothers. Amid all the badness, all the evil, there is still cause for hope! God will lift the knee of evil off our collective neck and we will **all** be able to breathe again. St. Paul also reminds us in today's second reading, "As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ." Y'all we are that one body. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus tells Peter: "And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it". As the Body of Christ that is His living, breathing Church, Jesus is telling us, in no uncertain terms, that **we will not be overcome!**

The promise of Pentecost, the love, the oneness, the unity, is not just a pipe dream. It is within our reach. You see, the Holy Spirit is the **personification of the love** that exist between the Father and the Son; and it has been poured into each of us for our very salvation. It is not a sentimental, purely emotional love. It is a tough love that forces us to look deeply into our very beings; to confront whatever evil lies there and get rid of it. It is truly the love that conquers all! If we are to survive as a society, a nation, a world, if we are to finally eradicate the virus of racism and be united in the way that we were meant to be, we must embrace the love of God, let it do what it does, and most importantly, share it with one another. For my sisters and brothers, Asian, black, brown, and white who have looked racism in the face, seen it for what it is and decided to take the cure, Praise God!!! Thank you! That is the best present we can give to the Universal Church, our one body, whose birthday we celebrate today!

I will leave you with another quote from Dr. King: "***I have decided to stick to love ... Hate is too great a burden to bear.***"

Amen