

in a

Word™

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BLACK LIVES MATTER

How many times must we say “Black lives matter” and hear “I can’t breathe” before every person in America – black and white, red, yellow and brown – heeds the call for systemic change in race relations?

-Bishop J. Terry Steib, SVD



A FAREWELL LETTER TO GEORGE FLOYD

BY

BISHOP FRANK NUBUASAH, SVD OF GABORONE, BOTSWANA

Dear Mr. George Floyd,

Good day to you.

I have no idea what time it is in your part of God's kingdom. But I do remember vividly our first meeting. It was at a baseball game. You came wearing blue jeans, T-shirt, a cap on, holding a huge paper cup filled with Coke in one hand and a bag of popcorn in the other. We were seated; you then joined us. That was in Pittsburgh many years ago. You were still a youngster, barely 20, on a trip. We got to chatting and become friends.

Under the circumstances this will be my last communication with you in this "land of the living" that rejected your right to live. How can I forget you George? Your distinctive features are a large nose and thick lips; very African traits. I know, you always reminded me that you are not African but African-American. Both backgrounds were important for you and you did not want to lose any. You were standing solidly with both feet in two traditions. Between these feet of yours was a lot of water called the Atlantic Ocean. You never got to cross it!

One of the things I cherish most about you was your very infectious smile. It was as if the coronavirus learnt from you how to infect people. Your heart was very big and accommodated people. It was always, okay with you to reach out to one more person. Yes, you would run a mile for anyone. Run you did for me on a number of occasions, but that is a story I will tell some other time.

My heart is heavy as I sit in my prayer corner to write you this missive knowing well that others will read it but you will not. We humans through a representative of ours made sure that your eyes were closed and would not open again. That is however not true, your eyes will remain forever seeing the fire you started at death. The revolution that your sacrificial death inspired and the new movements and alliances against racism, classism and discrimination are growing. You lit a fire that is burning for peace and change. So, my friend, when you hear the chant, "yes, we can" know that we are doing it in your name and for you. Gone, but very much here! On the mother continent we would call you, the living dead.

I recall the vacation I spent with you and your folks. Quincy was a baby boy at the time. It was a good escape from my books. What great BBQ's we enjoyed in the summer evenings. I thought we in Southern Africa eat a lot of meat, but boy, you love your rare stake with blood on it. You will remember that my preference was well done. You took me to watch a real football game not the American version but real football, the gentle game. Oh, yes, you were bored to the bone. You wanted your version of the game. I remember trying to educate you that the world governing body is called FIFA and not FISA when you refer to football as soccer. All that is water that has gone down under bridge near the three rivers stadium where we first met.

At my invitation, you were planning to visit the motherland and touch base with your roots. I had suggested that you attend the Pan African cultural festival known as PANAFEST in Ghana and then come over to beautiful Botswana to visit with me. I was going to take you see wildlife in their natural habitat, not a zoo. You were to visit a cattle post and a Masimo (ploughing field) and enjoy our coveted delicacy of pounded meat, Seswaa. I guess you are not coming in the flesh, so my plans would have to be put on ice. With global warming, maybe the ice would melt and I can revisit the plans. Who knows Quincy might make it to see the stunning beauty of a lady that puts me on her laps day and night to feed and nourish me. She caresses me and supports me. This beautiful lady Botswana is home to great men and women. How can you miss this visit we had planned so long ago? My heart is aching badly. My writing you this letter is a therapeutic coping mechanism I learnt years ago when we met in Pittsburgh.

Your life was cut short, my friend. You set another record by dying in the public view not in an accident. The event was captured on tape for posterity. Do you realize that you are a great man? Oh, how I love cell phones! No one can escape a crime with impunity because documentary evidence will circulate on social media. The criminal justice system might fail you but the popular opinion will know the truth.

The latest poll says two thirds of your country people are supporting the revolution you started at death. Now that you have seen the "janitors of Shadowland" (Job 38; 17) you have answered your call even if prematurely. I guess the folks in heaven were expecting you. Farewell my younger brother from another mother in America. We shall meet again.

Right now, I am angry because I am human and never thought humans can stoop so low. A huge welcome awaits you in the Father's house and I hope Coke and popcorn will be there too. You just have one more task to perform. It is to prepare to welcome the notorious four who killed you into heaven when their time does come and show 'em round the jolly place we call heaven. She said "when they go low, we go high." (Michelle Obama) I will miss you George.

You can now breathe eternally the breath of love. Rest in Peace!

Bishop Frank Nubuasah, SVD



Bishop Frank Nubuasah, SVD

A STATEMENT RE THE DEATH OF GEORGE FLOYD AND PEACEFUL PROTESTERS

MOST REVEREND J. TERRY STEIB, S.V.D.
BISHOP EMERITUS OF MEMPHIS
JUNE 8, 2020

How many murders and killings must happen to the Black men and women in America before we as a people will know justice? Far too many have happened!

How many times must we say “Black lives matter” and hear “I can’t breathe” before every person in America – black and white, red, yellow and brown – heeds the call for systemic change in race relations?

How many calls and demands for systemic change have we already heard? How many committees searching for police reform did we hear about? How many statements have we bishops, individually and collectively, authored or voted on which pointed to the sin of racism and race relations with our African American brothers and sisters in the United States? Far too many!

What has changed? Far too little!

I am proud that the vast majority of the protests going on during the days and weeks of commemorating the death of George Floyd have been peaceful. Dr. King would want it that way. And although much attention was given to the looters, it was the good people on the ground floor throughout our country who marched at some risk to their health to voice our call for justice and to demand that change is needed. It is their voice that is being heard. It is their cry to bring Dr. King’s dream and our dream to fulfillment so that we can truly say: “free at last!” And may that dream come sooner than all the promises of yesterday!

The decision of the attorney general in Minnesota to bring the former police officers who killed or abetted the killing of George Floyd to trial for 2nd degree murder signals that the people are being heard. This time it is more than tokenism. Mr. Ellison’s decision to go to trial signals that our nation is finally awakened and sees the caste systems and inherent bias against black people that is deeply embedded in our American history.

There is a dream in America. That dream is embedded in our Constitution. It says that all people are created equal. The Constitution tells all of us that we are to “promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity.” We are that posterity and there is nothing in the prologue to our Constitution that says “our posterity” is limited only to one particular color.



The decision of the Minneapolis officials to bring former police officers to trial for crimes marks another beginning of a movement. Dr. Martin Luther King believed that such

a movement calls all of us throughout our country to a completely integrated society, a beloved community of love and justice. Jesus simply says: “Love one another.” Jesus’ call urges us to see each other – maybe for the first time – through the lens of peace and justice, compassion and kindness, care and concern.

Jesus’s call to love and justice urges us to demand that the officials of our cities and towns, our counties and states, as well as our federal officials continue the hard process of effecting systemic change in our society. But let us allow the systemic changes to begin in our hearts and in our lives.

Because police brutality is, at the present time, uppermost in our minds and hearts because of George Floyd’s death and the death of so many others, we will begin again to pursue the beloved community of love and justice with police reform. Demonstrations and marches that include silence for 8 minutes and 46 seconds remind us that we can be one when we choose to be. The beloved community of love and justice is closer than it was when Dr. King told us: “Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”



“We the people” have been heard. Let us all walk on the path of love – the love that drives out hate and brings justice to each of us.

BLACK CATHOLIC REVELATION

Conclusion

This is a continuation of a reflection is from workshops given by Bishop Fernand Cheri, OFM in various venues to African American parish ministers.

OUR BLACKNESS AND CATHOLICISM IS THE FIRE SHUT UP IN OUR BONES. Like the Prophet Jeremiah, we are growing weary holding it in. The Black Catholic Community's Sanctified Spirit and Sanctified Mind demands that we speak; demands we act!!

THEREFORE, I PROPOSE:

The theme and thrust must be A NEW PENTECOST: Harvest Time for the Black Catholic Community

Our agenda based on Catholic social teachings and the Nguzo Saba (the Black Value System) are clear:

An accurate accounting of Black Catholic DEMOGRAPHICS – KUJICHAGULIA (Self-Determination) To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves. – Let us get an accounting of our churches, schools, institutions and leaders - where we demonstrate self-determination and direction of the African American Catholic community.

- A. Responsible EDUCATION – KUUMBA (Creativity) To do always as much as we can, in the way that we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful than when we inherited it. – Let us provide religious formation, academic formation, health formation and political formation - where we are the educators of a new heaven and a new earth where human dignity is affirmed in every situation and every occasion.
- B. Explain the BLACK FAMILY – UMOJA (Unity) To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation and race. – Let us offer the reality of the Black family demarcated, redefined and relevant today; the circumstances addressing the Black Lives Matter Movement and going deeper; addressing Black Young Adult/Youth concerns and advocating for them; connecting with the broader African Diaspora in the U.S., and the promotion of just economic and health care rights as the primary RIGHT TO LIFE issue of our church.
- C. Promotion of INSTITUTION BUILDING – UJAMAA (Cooperative Economics) To build and maintain our own stores, shops and other businesses and to profit from them together. – Let us administer economic endowment initiatives for Black Catholic scholarship and Black Catholic institutes; where we support and fund African American Catholicism, effectively and particularly, in the Institute for Black Catholic Studies at Xavier University of Louisiana, New Orleans; the Tolton Program of Catholic Theological Union, Chicago; and the Sankofa Institute of African American Pastoral Leadership at Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio. Let us call for each council and court of the Knights and Ladies of Peter Claver, as well as each parish, each diocese to enroll at least one person in one of these institutes of Black Catholicism each year.
- D. Raising up RESTORATIVE JUSTICE – UJIMA (Collective Work and Responsibility) To build and maintain our community together and to make our Brother's and sister's problems, our problems and to solve them together. – Let us endorse racial equity, advocacy, and incarceration reform. Where we initiate moral reform and advocate restorative justice in the African American community; for too many black women die during childbirth, too many Black young men and women are targets of law enforcement brutality, too many systems of justice are contaminated against us; and, too many white nationalists go unchallenged.
- E. Claiming and strengthening VOCATIONS – NIA (Purpose) – To make as our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness. Let us demand the rightful roles of the laity; where the baptized are supported; and

bishops, clergy and religious are fostered. Where we sustain men and women called to consecrated life with mentors and scholarship. Where we are actively and proactively involved in training these men and women in the ways of our culture, spirituality and history. Where we promote missionary discipleship with other African Americans and other Catholics, advocating our companionship as the Body of Christ.

- F. Embracing WORSHIP – IMANI To believe with all our hearts in our parents, our teachers, our leaders, our people and the righteousness and victory of our struggle. – Cultivating, celebrating and commissioning leadership to develop effective Black Catholic Worship, where we are the promoters of Black Catholicism that reflects our spirituality and culture as a vital gift to the life of the Catholic Church.

Barnabas left a tremendous legacy as a man of faith that left a lasting heritage and stored up for himself a lucrative inheritance in heaven. I appeal to you for my people and my church to be “THE MAINSTAYS” of Black Catholicism not only in worship, but in these seven Black values, the Catholic Social teachings and the Beatitudes of Jesus Christ – the way, the truth and the life. As Paul said to the church at Philippi, I say to you: “In everything you do, act without grumbling or arguing; prove yourselves innocent and straightforward, children of God beyond reproach in the midst of a twisted and depraved generation - among whom you shine like stars in the sky.” (Phil 2:12)

Call for A NEW PENTECOST: HARVEST TIME IN THE BLACK CATHOLIC COMMUNITY!!

Be “THE MAINSTAYS” of Black Catholicism so encouraging that you become the name of Black Catholicism in the U.S. What a legacy to leave! What an example to follow! Can we contend with divine and human beings and prevail like Jacob in the desert? (Gn 32:29) What would people re-name you – as the Angel re-named Jacob into “Israel”?

Let us pray, fast, work and worship professing with conviction:

If anybody ask you who I am, who I am, who I am.

If anybody ask you who I am
Tell them I’m a child of God

My Father is rich in houses and land.
He holds the world in the palm of His hand.
Rubies and diamonds, silver and gold
Just tell them I’m a child of God.

If anybody ask you who I am, who I am, who I am.

If anybody ask you who I am
Tell them I’m a child of God

If you don’t believe I’ve been redeemed
Just follow me down to that old Jordan stream.
Stepped in the water, the water was cold,
Chilled my body but not my soul.

If anybody ask you who I am, who I am, who I am.

If anybody ask you who I am
Tell them I’m a child of God



in a word or two

St. Augustine High School in New Orleans has received a \$1.5 million gift through Jack Dorsey's #StartSmall initiative.

Dorsey is the co-founder and CEO of Twitter and Square. His gift marks the largest one-time donation ever made to the school and is a part of a series of initiatives and programs geared toward building transformative academic experiences for students.

"We cannot overstate the power and reach of this transformational and game-changing gift from Mr. Jack Dorsey and #StartSmall," said St. Augustine High School President and CEO, Dr. Kenneth St. Charles. "This gift allows our school and students to continue to have a tremendous impact not only on our local and regional communities but on our entire nation. We are honored that Jack Dorsey, an international leader, chose to invest in St. Augustine High School. His support reaffirms the impact that our school has had in the past, and the unlimited potential we will continue to have not only in the African American community but in society at large. Future generations will benefit from this inspiring gift as St. Augustine works to prepare young men in ways that provide bold, transformative educational experiences grounded in our Catholic traditions."

At St. Augustine, the \$1.5 million gift will Help fund new academic programs and several capital improvement initiatives. Upgrades to classrooms, science labs, and other critical facilities will provide innovative technological advancements that will transform the curriculum, preparing students to meet the challenges of today's world.

"Upon entering the halls of St. Augustine High School, I was immediately inspired by the confidence, ambition and passion exhibited by each of the young men. I knew then, that the opportunity to support these students and future students was much larger than a classroom visit, said TJ Adeshola, head of sports partnerships at Twitter. "While I routinely find myself in awe of Jack, the #StartSmall team and the work they do, I'm especially proud to see St. Augustine and my good friend Aulston Taylor, Chief Development Officer at the school, benefit from this wonderful, generous gift."

In addition to transforming the academic offerings, the school will also dedicate a portion of the funding to assist families who recently experienced financial difficulties resulting from the recent pandemic, officials at the school said.

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- **Speaking at a special U.N. discussion about racism and police brutality, a Vatican official repeated Pope Francis' recent remarks: "We cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in any form and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life."** Speaking about demonstrations in the United States following the killing of George Floyd by police, Pope Francis also said, "At the same time, we have to recognize that violence is self-destructive and self-defeating. Nothing is gained by violence and so much is lost." Archbishop Ivan Jurkovic, the Vatican's permanent observer to U.N. agencies in Geneva, shared the pope's words June 18 as the U.N. Human Rights Council held an "urgent debate on current racially inspired human rights violations, systemic racism, police brutality against people of African descent and violence against peaceful protests. Racial discrimination in all its forms is absolutely intolerable," Archbishop Jurkovic told the meeting. "All members of the human

family, made in the image and likeness of God are equal in their inherent dignity, regardless of race, nation, sex, origin, culture or religion. States are called to recognize, defend and promote the fundamental human rights of each person."

Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of Bishop Curtis J. Guillory of Beaumont, Texas, and named as his successor Msgr. David L. Toups, president and rector of St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary in Boyton Beach, Florida.

Bishop Guillory, 76, was appointed to head the Beaumont Diocese in 2000 by St. John Paul II, two years after the pope named him as an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston.

A native of Seattle, Bishop-designate Toups, 49, is a priest of the Diocese of St. Petersburg, Florida, and has been seminary president and rector in Boyton Beach since 2012.

Archbishop Christophe Pierre, the Vatican nuncio to the United States, announced the changes June 9.

Bishop Guillory, one of 10 African American Catholic bishops, is the first African American bishop to head a diocese in Texas. In February 2019, Catholic Extension honored him with its third annual Spirit of Francis Award for his "faith, hope, vision, great compassion and love," his leadership, and his commitment to the Catholic Church and the diverse faith community of southeast Texas.

The episcopal ordination and installation of Bishop-designate Toups will be Aug. 21 at St. Anthony Cathedral Basilica in Beaumont. Until then, Bishop Guillory will serve as apostolic administrator of the diocese

"In the middle of a pandemic, racial tension, protests, economic downturn and at the start of hurricane season, I am like the angels at Our Lord's birth bringing good news to the shepherds," Bishop Guillory said in introducing his successor at the cathedral.



**+Bishop George V. Murry, S.J., Ph.D.
December 28, 1948 - June 5, 2020**

The Most Reverend George V. Murry, S.J., Ph.D., Bishop of the Diocese of Youngstown, passed away Friday morning, June 5, 2020, at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York City. May he rest in peace!

Divine Word Missionaries is an international missionary community of over 7,000 brothers and priests. In 1905 the SVDs began working among African Americans in the Southern United States. Today, Divine Word Missionaries work in over 35 parishes in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, Florida and Arkansas. IN A WORD is a publication of The Society of the Divine Word's Media Production Center. Rev. James Pawlicki, S.V.D., Director and Editor; Cathy Green-Miner, office manager; consultant.

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