

June 1, 2020

Dear parishioners and friends of Gesu,

In his World Day of Peace message of January 1, 1972, Pope Paul VI declared, “If you want peace, then work for justice.”

Pope Paul VI’s call for justice is anticipated centuries earlier in the words of the prophet, Micah: “What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8).

Recent events surrounding the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis and Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia have compelled us as a nation and a Church to confront the recurring problem of racism and racial justice.

In their Pastoral Letter of 1979, “Brothers and Sisters to Us”, the US Catholic Bishops did not mince words. They write: “Racism is not one sin among many, it is a radical evil dividing the human family.”

Sadly, time and time again, in our nation’s history, we have witnessed this “radical evil” cause divisions in our human family and destruction to human life and property. Justice must be served in the cases of George Floyd and Ahmaud Arbery, so that peace and civil rest can be preserved.

Gesu stands committed to assist with the pursuit of justice in all its forms—racial, economic, ecological, etc.—so that peace may reign. We might envision this pursuit as the “tongues of fire” that descend upon the disciples, in the first reading for the Feast of Pentecost, Luke’s *Acts of the Apostles*.

In the gospel text for the Feast of Pentecost, Jesus declares to his fearful disciples, “Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you” (John 20:21). It is a startling declaration, peace amid turmoil, unrest, chaos, and fear. Paradoxically, it is also a declaration that empowers and emboldens the disciples to move beyond locked doors, beyond the turmoil, unrest, chaos, and fear.

As a Catholic, Jesuit parish in the heart of the City of Milwaukee, we are sent to be courageous disciples of justice and peace, “always ready to give a reason for the hope that is within you” (1 Peter: 3:15).

This is the hope of the resurrection, the hope of Jesus Christ, the hope that~ if we practice justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God—will ultimately prevail and set us free!

We pray the response to the Psalm of Pentecost Sunday: “Lord, send out your spirit and renew the face of the earth.”

Fr. Jim Flaherty, SJ
Pastor