



CURIA
GENERALIZIA
AGOSTINIANA

VIA PAOLO VI, 25 - 00193 ROMA
Tel. +39 06.680061

17 June 2020

BLACK LIVES MATTER

a Statement from the Commission for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation

The recent death of George Floyd, an African American man, at the hands of a white policeman in Minneapolis, has ignited worldwide protests under the banner of Black Lives Matter. Demonstrations have been taking place not only in the United States but in many other countries beyond. The Commission for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation of the Order wishes to express its solidarity with those campaigning for justice and equality for black people and all who are the victims of discrimination, especially in the most economically advanced societies of the world, while condemning the violence of a minority of protesters.

Scripture records inequality and injustice in biblical times, from the enslavement of the Israelites in Egypt to the injunction in the Letter of James (2:9) not to make distinctions between classes of people. These issues continue into modern times. Slavery is the exploitation of human beings for the purposes of greed, and its consequences are still being felt in racism in various forms, from discrimination in the workplace to police brutality. Ahead of his time, Augustine called for the emancipation of slaves (Letter 10); and his reference in the Rule (I,9) to each person being a temple of the Holy Spirit is a powerful challenge to all forms of racial and class discrimination. The wider context, however, is an inequality built into economic systems that favour profit for a few over human dignity and the common good, including the sacredness of the earth. This is found not only in wealthy countries but also in those nations seeking economic development, where inadequate policies of education, healthcare, policing and incarceration are perpetuating injustice.

The Commission for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation calls upon the Augustinian Order worldwide to promote racial and social justice, in our parishes, schools and missions; and,

wherever appropriate, to support those legitimate and non-violent movements and organizations seeking to uphold the dignity of everyone in society.

In the words of Pope Francis addressed to the people of the United States: ‘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... [I pray] for the repose of the soul of George Floyd and of all those others who have lost their lives as a result of the sin of racism’ (General Audience, 3 June 2020).

The Commission for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation

Paul Graham OSA, Convenor

Tony Banks OSA, Vice-Convenor

Bob Dueweke OSA, *ex officio*, UN Representative

