

Homily 12th Sunday Ordinary Time - Black Lives Matter

There is a verse in the gospel this morning that has haunted me all week as I sat with the scriptures these past days.

There is a verse in the gospel this morning that was written many years ago but speaks to me and challenges me to really hear it perhaps as it was intended by the author.

There is a verse in the gospel this morning that shouts to me that there is a truth in this country that must be spoken and that must be realized by those of us who are not people of color.

That verse Jesus says to the disciples, "Nothing is concealed that will not be revealed, nor secret that will not be known. What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light; what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. And do not be afraid of those who will kill the body but cannot kill the soul..."

I can no longer stay in the darkness, I must speak out in the light, the light of truth, the light of justice, the light of what every human being deserves-the right to live without fear and the right to live in peace with all our sisters and brothers...that truth is that BLACK LIVES MATTER.

These words of scripture challenge me to look seriously at my life and the part I have played in what is going on in our country, in our system of justice where Black Lives do not seem to matter.

All any of us have to do is ask why George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbury, Eric Garner, Sandra Bland, Michael Brown or any number of other black human beings are dead at the hands of violence in a country built on justice and liberty for all?

I ask myself why?

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There are some inequalities at play here.

I am a privileged white man. I am a privileged white man who is a clergy person in the Roman Catholic Church.

I am a privileged white man who had opportunities for education, a good healthy family life, parents and a family who cared for me and loved me and supported me.

I am a privileged white man who does not have to worry about where I would jog, if I jogged.

I do not have to worry about someone coming into my home and shooting me while I sleep.

I do not have to worry about being arrested for a traffic stop or being jailed for a traffic stop.

All this because I am WHITE.

Simply by the color of my skin and the circumstances of my life I have had advantages that were not afforded equally to all my black sisters and brothers.

I do not need to worry about self-preservation each and every day.

I do not need to worry about surviving everyday activities such as jogging, driving sleeping, BBQing, meeting for coffee, bird watching or shopping.

Unfortunately this has not been the case for our black sisters and brothers for over 400 years of our nation's history.

These daily occurrences of racial injustice and inequality due to the color of their skin are part of their everyday real life experiences, even today!

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I heard a speaker say that these daily experiences “trigger centuries of trauma” and that our black sisters and brothers don’t have the “luxury or rather the privilege to just walk away from them when the media moves onto the next story”.

It was reported that George Floyd cried out for his mother as he was dying.

He summoned us all to listen to his cry “I CAN’T BREATHE”.

He summons all of us to listen and to really hear all that is being said to us whenever we hear BLACK LIVES MATTER

I need to take in and listen to the stories and experiences of my black sisters and brothers, not ever because I will understand but that I might be empathetic and be able to walk with them in solidarity and transformation.

Transformation for all of us, that we might listen and understand and move to change the way we live together and speak truth to power that we might live in a world that is moving towards freedom and justice for all.

Transformation that leads to a society in which “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” and equality is for all, not just for a white guy like me who is used to living in white privilege.

In all these protests these lasts weeks I am sensing a difference in the feel, the energy and the tenor of the activity of gathering in peaceful groups calling to all of us to change and to look inside ourselves.

To look inside and ask ourselves what do we all have to offer so that all might live and all might breathe for a lifetime.

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In the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbury, Eric Garner, Sandra Bland, Michael Brown, and all the others, a light has been rekindled, a dream has been reawakened, the dream of the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr when he said in 1963:

“I say to you today, my friends, even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up, live out the true meaning of its creed: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.’

“I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream that one day little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.”

I have a dream that we will truly acknowledge the truth that BLACK LIVES MATTER because

Black lives don't just matter

Black lives inspire

Black lives uplift

Black lives bring beauty

Black lives spread wisdom

Black lives revolutionize

Black lives make the world an infinitely more beautiful place.

And may we all speak truth in the light that Black lives matter.

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