



Brighton Catholic Parishes News

St James & St Joan of Arc



13th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME. Year A

28th June, 2020

Services

Please contact the office regarding baptisms, weddings and funerals.

Sunday Mass

Sat 6.00pm & Sun 9am at St James Church
Sun 11am & 5.30pm at St Joan of Arc Church.

Weekday Masses

Tues at 6pm & Thur 9.15am at St James.
Wed & Fri at 9.15am at St Joan of Arc.

Weddings & Baptisms

By appointment.

Parish Groups

Most groups are not currently meeting.

Card Players:

First Thursday of the month in the St Joan of Arc presbytery meeting room from 11.30am.

Meditation:

Mon 10am in presbytery at St Joan of Arc.

Prayer Group:

Thursday at 8pm in St Joan of Arc Church.

Social Justice Group:

Every second Thursday of the month in the presbytery at St Joan of Arc at 7.30 pm

Parish Contacts

Parish Priest:

Fr Martin Dixon

Pastoral Associate:

Carole Cheng

Organist:

Mary Taylor

Cantors:

Adam Kaczanowski & Marie-France Urruty

Parish Accountant:

Marina Stevenson

Parish Secretary:

Elaine Bolitho

Administration:

Nici Bonning

Office:

118 New St, Brighton. 3186

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www.cam.org.au/brighton

St Vincent de Paul Society

For welfare assistance phone

1800 305 330

Message From Fr Martin

Many years ago I was privileged to visit the tomb of Archbishop Oscar Romero in the crypt of the cathedral in San Salvador. A moving moment that stays in my mind, to be at the tomb of a man regarded by the people as martyr. Several years later when back in El Salvador I had a greater experience by being able to visit the Chapel of the Divine Providence Hospital where he was murdered. I stood at the altar in that chapel and looked down the aisle to its open doors.

On the evening of 24 March 1980, Oscar Romero, the Archbishop of San Salvador was saying the 5 pm Mass for the nuns, staff and patients of the hospital. A military vehicle passed the chapel and returned, the officer got out and balancing his rifle on the door of the car shot Romero while he stood at the altar.

Oscar Romero had only been archbishop for three years, and when he was appointed he was considered a conservative, not wanting to upset tradition. The military junta were delighted to have a compliant archbishop during this period of great civil unrest.

A close friend of Romero was a Jesuit priest, Fr. Ruhelo Grande. Grande had denounced the unjust treatment of over 30,000 peasants working on the local sugar farms, and he defended their right to organize co-operatives. The military junta took exception to this, and Grande, along with an elderly man and a 16 year old boy were gunned down in their car. The archbishop was summoned to view the bodies, presumably a warning to meddling priests.

Romero went through a strong conversion. His response was to cancel all Sunday masses and have one big celebration which was attended by thousands. Romero became a prophet, proclaiming the gospel with enormous courage. He became a spokesperson for the poor and those suffering from the oppression of the military. It made him an enemy of the Military.

The day before he died he appealed to the military: "In the name of God, and in the name of the suffering people, whose tears and cries mount to heaven, and daily growing louder, I beg you, I entreat you, I order you, in the name of God stop this repression."

Romero was opposed not only by the military, but also by some of the bishops, and by the ruling class where 90% of the wealth was owned by just 1% of the population. Even today, in El Salvador, the rich still consider him to be a communist and agitator. He was made a saint by Pope Francis in 14 October 2018. A prophet is not even welcomed in his own land.



Remember In Our Prayers

Illness: Kuldip Ahluwalia, Kerry Basham, Anne de Rebello, Barbara Gallo, Antony LaRive, Tatiana Mansel, Gabrielle Marylees, George McLean, Freddy McGuigan, Margaret McGrath, Kevin Nichollis, David Quinn, Catherine Ryan, Giovanni Sabato, Edward Shelley, Rob Smith, Emily Somers, Brian Taylor, Barbara Turner, Robin Turner

Anniversaries: Jean Dillon, Adele Duffy, Melanie Hunt, Peter O'Loughlin, Pamela Semmel

READINGS & REFLECTION

BE STILL

Light a candle as a reminder of God's presence.

Take a moment to allow whatever is in your heart to rise, and offer your thoughts to the loving care of the Lord today.



O God, come to our aid.
Lord, make haste to help us.
Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen

OPENING PRAYER

All-powerful God,
Your incarnate word commands our obedience and offers us life.
Make our ears attentive to the voice of your Son
And our hearts generous in answering his call,
That we may take up the cross with trust in his promises.
Grant this thru' our Lord Jesus Christ, your son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever.

FIRST READING:

2 Kgs 4:8-11. 14-16

One day as Elisha was on his way to Shunem, a woman of rank who lived there pressed him to stay and eat there. After this he always broke his journey for a meal when he passed that way. She said to her husband, 'Look, I am sure the man who is constantly passing our way must be a holy man of God. Let us build him a small room on the roof, and put him a bed in it, and a table and chair and lamp; whenever he comes to us he can rest there.'

One day when he came, he retired to the upper room and lay down. 'What can be done for her?' he asked. Gehazi (his servant) answered, 'Well, she has no son and her husband is old.' Elisha said, 'Call her.' The servant called her and she stood at the door. 'This time next year,' Elisha said 'you will hold a son in your arms.'

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

(R.) Forever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

1. I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord;
through all ages my mouth will proclaim your truth.
Of this I am sure, that your love lasts for ever,
that your truth is firmly established as the heavens. **(R.)**
2. Happy the people who acclaim such a king,
who walk, O Lord, in the light of your face,
who find their joy every day in your name,
who make your justice the source of their bliss. **(R.)**
3. For it is you, O Lord, who are the glory of their strength;
it is by your favour that our might is exalted:
for our ruler is in the keeping of the Lord;
our king in the keeping of the Holy One of Israel. **(R.)**

SECOND READING:

Rom 6:3-4. 8-11

When we were baptised in Christ Jesus we were baptised in his death; in other words, when we were baptised we went into the tomb with him and

joined him in death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glory, we too might live a new life.

But we believe that having died with Christ we shall return to life with him: Christ, as we know, having been raised from the dead will never die again. Death has no power over him any more. When he died, he died, once for all, to sin, so his life now is life with God; and in that way, you too must consider yourselves to be dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood,
a holy people. Praise God who called you out
of darkness and into his marvellous light.
Alleluia!



GOSPEL:

Mt 10:37-42

Jesus instructed the Twelve as follows: 'Anyone who prefers father or mother to me is not worthy of me. Anyone who prefers son or daughter to me is not worthy of me. Anyone who does not take his cross and follow in my footsteps is not worthy of me. Anyone who finds his life will lose it; anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it.

'Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me; and those who welcome me welcome the one who sent me.

'Anyone who welcomes a prophet because he is a prophet will have a prophet's reward; and anyone who welcomes a holy man because he is a holy man will have a holy man's reward.

'If anyone gives so much as a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is a disciple, then I tell you solemnly, he will most certainly not lose his reward.'

HOMILY:

Richard Leonard

For all the great things the Church of yesteryear achieved, it also did some terrible things. One of the worst demands it made was that a Catholic who married a person who was not a Catholic did so at a side altar, oratory or in the sacristy of the Church. How humiliating this directive was. For how long were we going to punish the Protestant Reformers and young Catholic woman or man who fell in love with someone from these denominations? In these ecumenical days, it's hard for us to understand these actions.

Today, especially at weddings, I hear older Catholics talk about this experience more than anything else. It's often given as the reason why the person or their family stopped practising their Catholic faith. Recently an older wedding guest told me that her wedding day at the side altar was the last day she came to the Church of her own free will. She never had her children baptised and her painful experience was still palpable forty years on as she compared and contrasted her wedding day with the Catholic marriage ceremony of a couple in a similar religious circumstance to her own which we had just celebrated. All I can do in such circumstances is apologise for the hurt our shortsightedness caused and be full of admiration for those who were subjected to similar treatment but have remained constant to our Catholic community.

These days inter-denominational marriages are rarely the reasons over which a family will divide. But we know that other religious issues can still break up a family. It's always a tragedy when this happens. For example, maybe you've had a son, daughter or a grandchild join a religious sect or cult. It's heartbreaking stuff for parents who wonder what their child sees in the sect and where it will all end.

The Church has sometimes let families down in this regard. Appearing to prefer dogma to the complexities of people's lives, formal liturgy to creating communities of hospitality, care and justice, the church can appear to be out of touch, especially with our young. I know that every person in authority in the Church today knows that the Catholic Church needs to listen to our young people, hear about the issues that concern them and present

our faith in a way they find accessible and engaging. Very often it's not what we say about our rich faith, it's how we say it. Many people don't leave the mainstream churches because they are attracted by another group's doctrine, though some do want the world to be very black and white. Many leave for smaller groups offering a tightly knit community.

From today's Gospel we know that the same family heartbreak occurred in the early church. At this time, however, Christianity was the small sect drawing believers away from Judaism, to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. It ripped families apart. The early church became the new family of many followers who were disowned. They lost their life and found a new one in Christ.

There can be moments when a family's lifestyle, beliefs, behaviour or values are such that one member feels that, in conscience, or by conviction, he or she does not belong anymore.

When this happens we can listen carefully to reasons the family member gives. Maybe we have lost something essential in our life together that needs challenging and change. And maybe it's the family member who is in the wrong.

Keeping the lines of communication open, speaking the truth with calmness and love and remaining as compassionate as possible are the best Christian responses.

I can't pretend that any of this is easy, but, when I have seen families do it, the prophetic, truthful and charitable rewards Jesus offers in today's Gospel are powerfully in evidence.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Let us pray for the needs of our world, especially those who need your love for their healing.

We pray for the Church throughout the world, especially for our leaders in faith.

May our hearts and minds be filled with God's love and peace to spread his good news to all people. Lord hear our prayer

We pray for the sick and dying, the homeless and imprisoned, those in detention and refugee centres.

May they experience compassion and understanding from those entrusted with their care. Lord hear our prayer

We pray the Holy Spirit touches the lives of all peoples, bringing trust and hope to friends and communities throughout Australia and the world.

May they be guided by your gifts and love, respect and honour all people of all cultures, and bring much needed justice and peace to all God's people. Lord hear our prayer

We pray for our young people.

May they discover the way of life God has planned for each one of them, through strong leadership from their community. Lord hear our prayer

For those who have died recently and all whose memory is sacred at this time.

May they come to the table of the Lord in eternal life. Lord hear our prayer.

For the prayers we hold in our hearts

We pray: In your love, Lord, hear our prayer.

We make our prayers with trust and confidence that God will grant us the power of the Holy Spirit to grow as a people of faith. Through Christ the Lord. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven.....

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
graciously grant peace in our days,
that, by the help of your mercy,
we may be always free from sin
and safe from all distress,
as we wait in hope for the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and
for ever.

May the Lord bless us, and keep us from all evil, and bring us
to everlasting life.

Let us go in the peace of the Lord.

SCRIPTURE COMMENTARY

by Brendan Byrne SJ

If a common thread is to be found between today's **First Reading** (2 Kings 4:8-11, 13-16) and the **Gospel** (Matthew 10:37-42), it probably lies in the idea of 'welcome'. The reward promised to the Shunamite woman who welcomed and gave hospitality to the prophet Elisha foreshadows the promise contained in the Gospel for those who 'welcome a prophet because he is a prophet.'

There is a delightful humanity in the thoughtful provision the Shunamite woman made for Elisha: a small room on the roof of the house, containing not only a bed, but also a table, a chair, and even a lamp. These basic gestures of hospitality, offered simply out of respect for a man of God and with no thought of a reward, receive in fact a wonderful reward: next year, she and her husband, childless up to this point, would rejoice in the gift of new life: 'you will hold a son in your arms.' So too, according to the Gospel, even so simple a gift as a cup of cold water will not go unnoticed by the Author of life.

But the idea of 'welcome' is only part of what is contained in the Gospel. First there is a very challenging instruction of Jesus, warning that 'anyone who prefers father or mother to me is not worthy of me.' The challenge doubtless reflects the situation of believers for whom the threat of persecution was very real. In cases where some members of a family were Christian and some were not, the stark choice between 'preferring' mother or father to allegiance to Christ faced such believers daily.

A glance at our newspapers or television screens makes clear that this was not simply a challenge for the first generations. Many Christians in countries where they are a minority or where inter-community divisions with a religious basis are intense, will hear this part of today's Gospel with a sense of far deeper relevance.

We, who live in societies that are either majority Christian or tolerantly post-Christian, do not face the challenge of the Gospel so starkly. The problem for us is to hear the challenge at all – or at least to hear it and not simply dismiss it as extremist and impossible of application in the world in which we live. The words of Christ, however, do apply to all believers. If we are simply comfortable in our world, largely sharing its values and aspirations, then there is probably something that we are failing to notice, some aspect of Christ's message that is not getting through.

It is here, perhaps, that the second part of the Gospel text, with its sense of 'welcome', comes into play. One of the truly striking features of Matthew's Gospel is the sense of 'Emmanuel – God with us' which attends the presentation of Jesus from beginning to end. It comes to a climax, of course, in the parable of the Great Judgment (25:31-46) where, over and over again, we hear the refrain, 'As often as you did it (or failed to do it) to the least of my brothers and sisters, you did it (or failed to do it) to me.' Exactly the same identification appears in the central statement in the present text: 'Anyone who welcomes you, welcomes me; and those who welcome me, welcome the one who sent me.' The theological dimensions of this statement are profound: the stranger who stands before us comes not simply as an emissary and representative of Christ but of the Father who sent Christ into the world. In dealing with this person we are dealing with our God.

This theme of welcome and hospitality in the second part of the Gospel does perhaps, in a very complementary way, point out where the challenge contained in the opening words applies for followers of Christ in a First World situation. As scarcely ever before in human history, save perhaps in the immediate aftermath of World War II, have so many of our fellow human beings been displaced and on the move. Strangers in their millions line up at frontiers or make risky, desperate voyages in an attempt to escape for themselves and their children from war, tyranny or economic misery. In contemplation of this mass movement the words of Christ may not seem so far away and inapplicable as at first sight.

Paul's message to the Christians of Rome in the **Second Reading**, Romans 6:3-4, 8-11, stresses the radicality of the change effected in baptism: it is really a 'death' to an old existence dominated by selfishness and sin and an entrance into the world of the new creation inaugurated by the resurrection of Christ. There, in union with him, one 'lives for God', caught up in the rhythm of his self-sacrificial love.

Parish News

A LITTLE BIT OF HUMOUR

The scene is Glasgow and a young Glaswegian called into the newspaper office and said:

"I want to put a notice in about a friend who died a year ago.."

The lass on the desk replied: Okay, Jock, that's alright. That's what is known as an "In Memoriam" notice. Just put whatever you want to say on the form and bring it back. Jock went away for a while and came back with the filled-in form.

It said: I am missing you, Hamish.

The lass said: "Oh Jock that's only five words, do you know you can get ten words for the same price."

"Oh," he said. "If that's the case I'll rewrite it." After a while he brought the form back and the lass said:

"Now what do you want to say, Jock?"

He said: "I want to say 'I am missing you, Hamish. Set of bagpipes for sale.'"

Mass Bookings

Please continue to book places for weekend Masses through TryBooking or by contacting the parish office. Mass bookings will be open online from 1pm this Saturday and end at 3pm on the day before the Mass next weekend. Several additional places are available for volunteers at the Masses. To volunteer please email Carole at Carole.cheng@cam.org.au

Click or input the link for St James Masses

<https://www.trybooking.com/BJPUC>

Click or input the link for St Joan of Arc Masses

<https://www.trybooking.com/BJPUK>

Thank You

for your Kindness



Thank you to St James Primary School

The food, blankets and winter woolens given to us on Tuesday by the St James students, staff and parents for our Vinnies Winter Appeal was far more generous than we imagined we would receive in this troubled Covid-19 time.

Student leaders have also raised money for us to buy Coles vouchers for families to buy fresh fruit, vegetables bread and milk. Part of the money raised will buy uniforms and books for students in Myanmar and India through the Vinnies Assist a Child program.

Our pantry shelves were almost empty. Now we can provide quality food, toiletries and warm 'extras' to people who are struggling to get through this bleak winter of uncertainty about jobs and the future. We are very grateful to St James Primary School for their amazing generosity.

Thank you from St Vincent de Paul – Gardenvale Conference.

Thank You
Sr Kathleen

'Queen of the Beanie Knitters.'



We always pop at least one of Sister Kathleen's beanies in every Vinnies food hamper we take when we visit. Just as we are running low, a new bag of beanies is delivered to us. They are always received with a smile and a genuine thank you for the fact that someone cared enough to knit a warm beanie for them. This small kindness brings hope and care to the lives of others and is much appreciated.

History of St James

We are seeking support from interested parishioners to continue the work of Diana Cole, the former historian of St James.

All parishioners are encouraged to submit any material in their possession to assist us with continuation of this work.

St James began as the Brighton Mission in 1861, followed later by parish, church and school. Many changes have occurred over that time.

Initial enquiries to John Taylor would be appreciated (0418 393 929) or email inchland@ozemail.com.au



Parish Celebration for National Aborigines and Torres Strait Islander Week

Next weekend the parishes will celebrate NAIDOC week with the installation of acknowledgment plaques. The plaques are endorsed by the Australian Bishops Conference and are beautifully decorated with artwork to depict togetherness in God and unity with one another. The design was created by Murri Ministry in Brisbane.

Each plaque will be accompanied with a letter outlining the importance of acknowledgment and explaining the traditional concept of custodianship of the land in difference to ownership.

Each parish, school or organization that displays a plaque will be added to the Partners in Faith list at www.natsicc.org.au.

Many thanks to the members of our Social Justice Group for organizing the plaques for our parishes. They will be installed after the 9am and 11am Masses on the 5th July. Parishioners are invited to attend the special Masses or come along to the installation ceremony after the Masses at approximately 9.50am (St James) and 11.50am (St Joan of Arc)

The current health regulations apply as usual.

Working With Children & Young People



Dear parishioners, the child safety mailing to volunteers has now taken place.

We fully appreciate that these compliance measures may be cumbersome so please contact us if we can assist you in any way.

Many thanks to those who have returned the signed Declaration already. If you are a volunteer and didn't receive the mailing please let us know.

St Vincent de Paul WINTER APPEAL

835,000 – That's how many people have lost their jobs since March!



After last month's initial figures on the impact of the nationwide COVID-19 shutdown, **a further 227,200 people have lost their jobs in the last month.**

Already we are assisting people affected by job losses because of the Covid-19 shutdown. We know the demand will increase in the coming winter months and after September. This makes your gifts of money and food even more valued and valuable this Winter than for any other year. Please help.

We Need Your Financial Help

- **Phone by calling 13 18 12 using a credit card.**
PLEASE allocate your donations to either **St James or St Joan of Arc**. Receipts will be issued by the Fundraising Team.
- **Online at vinnies.org.au**
PLEASE complete in the "Comments" field by allocating your donations to either **St James or St Joan of Arc**.
Receipts will be automatically emailed to donors

Donations of \$2 or more are tax-deductible.

Winter Pantry Appeal

We need non-perishable food donations to continually add to our St James storeroom/pantry

- **Tea/coffee/Milo/Longlife milk** – small to medium packets preferred
- **Cans:** soups, stews, beans, spaghetti, ham, spam, tuna, salmon, vegetables, tomatoes, fruit
- **Dry Food:** Pasta, rice, weet-bix, rolled oats

(NB. Check the use-by dates on food items before donating)

Please place your donations at [St James Church in the Vinnies baskets at the entrance door](#). We will deliver this food to families in need in our local communities.

**“Let us do whatever good
lies in our hands”**

Racism, the Church and the suffering of people of African descent

Reflections from a Nigerian Catholic priest studying and teaching in the United States

[Stan Chu Ilo](#) [United States](#)

Among the most important contributions of the Catholic Church in the modern era to healing the legacy of [racism](#) and anti-blackness were Pope John Paul II's public apologies to people of African descent.

During a visit to Cameroon in 1985 he [apologized](#) to blacks throughout the world for the involvement of white Christians in the slave trade.

He apologized again in 1992 at the [Door of No Return](#) on the Island of Goree in Senegal, from where more than 60,000 enslaved Africans were transported by sea from Africa to the Americas during the slavery period.

The Polish pope not only asked Africans for forgiveness for the crimes committed against her sons and daughters by Christians and their nations, he also emphasized that the world should never forget the "enormous suffering", the abuse of human rights and "the black pain" of what he calls the horrors and drama of slavery "by a civilization that called itself Christian".

This singular penitential act preceded John Paul's invitation to Christians and the institutional Church, for an examination of conscience and purification of memory by all Christians at the dawn of the New Millennium in his 1994 apostolic letter [Tertio millennio adveniente](#).

He spoke strongly on the need for the Church to embrace the path of repentance by first becoming, "more fully conscious of the sinfulness of her children, recalling all those times in history when they departed from the spirit of Christ and his Gospel and, instead of offering to the world the witness of a life inspired by the values of faith, indulged in ways of thinking and acting which were truly forms of counter-witness and scandal".

Many black people throughout the world prayed then that the pope's example would encourage all Western governments who were involved in the shameful enslavement and dehumanization of blacks, indigenous peoples and all God's people to publicly apologize for these grave evil against God and humanity, and undertake a comprehensive step towards repairing the harm caused and its continuing consequences.

Many blacks and peoples of color in the Global South have continued to bear this burden brought upon them as a result of slavery, colonialism and racism. It is built on the neo-liberal capitalism that sustains the present iniquitous global order and the "economy that kills", as Pope Francis consistently calls it.

Many Africans and oppressed people the world over had hoped that the global movement for justice, democracy and human rights – which led to the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the dawn of a New Millennium – would lead to restorative justice for blacks.

Sadly, it did not. And it did not even usher in a new wave of apologies, following John Paul II's example. Particularly in the United States, there has been no concerted and honest effort to confront this demon of the past.

This is why African Americans and subsequently black immigrants continue to suffer today because the United States has not embarked on a serious national process of healing and restorative justice for blacks.

Instead, blacks continue to bear the brunt of individual, institutionalized and systemic racism and discrimination, which many [US Church leaders](#) and theologians constantly refer to as America's "original sin".

Racism: a daily reality for most blacks in America and throughout the world

The current anti-racism movement – which began as a response to the painful public asphyxiation of an unarmed African American man, George Floyd – has also elicited strong condemnations and *mea culpas* from activists, as well as Church and political leaders.

[Pope Francis](#) reacted to Floyd's killing by reminding the world "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".



But asking for forgiveness as John Paul II did or condemning the brutal killing of an African American as Francis did are not enough.

The Church can and should do more, because racism and anti-blackness is a global pandemic. It is worse than COVID-19 and has tainted human history since time immemorial.

Racism is not only a crime against humanity. It is also a crime against God.

First, the Catholic Church needs to denounce racism as a heresy. She must unhinge herself from any form of political ideology or political figures, corporations and entities who through their words and actions continue to promote racist thinking, policies and rhetoric.

Those who advance the false ideology of the superiority of one race or nation over others in any shape or form should be condemned as enemies of God and enemies of life. Being pro-life for the Church should also include an anti-racism stance.

Second, the time has come for the Church to revise the Code of Canon Law and its penitential rites to integrate the penal precepts against her racist members.

There needs to be put in place some rites and rituals for purging and healing both the racist members, Church leaders and ministers who espouse racist teaching and actions in order to purge the lifeblood of the Church of this filth.

This is one concrete and sacramental way of trying to repair the harm any racist actions bring upon people and the wound it brings on the heart of our loving God, whose heart is open to all creation in its diversity and beauty.

Third, George Floyd's death has shown only one facet of the persistence of racism against black people in the United States and in the world. The public display of his brutal killing pulled the heartstrings of many women and men of goodwill.

However, the greatest and most insidious aspect of racism today, is that it is hidden from the public eye in many ways. Implicit bias is an "invisible" form of racism that many "good" people display in their attitudes towards blacks.

It masks hidden hatred with empty platitudes or sermons about the good intention of "good" people; it deploys all kinds of pretty language and social policies and educational programs that all reinforce existing structures of oppression, social hierarchies and white privilege.

And it foists a cycle of dependency upon blacks in America.

Hidden bias and ideologies of power

Hidden bias is so virulent for three reasons.

Firstly, it *pathologizes black people* – by claiming that there is something wrong with African Americans.

Secondly, it *victimizes the black victims of violence* a second time – by claiming that their crimes or behaviors contribute to the unjust treatment they receive at the hand of society, for their incarceration or the capital punishment which continues to decimate a large section of black men.

Thirdly, it *minimizes the extent and devastating impact of racism* – by pointing to successful black people and social policies put in place to help blacks.

The response in the United States to George Floyd's death has also revealed the ideologically driven nature of racialized thinking, action and ha-

tred in the country.

One immediately sees in the face of the national and international outrage, how bias, stereotype, and internalized racism function.

The topic of racism has always been polarizing in America, the Church and elsewhere because it is tied up with power and privilege. The kinds of institutional reform, as well as personal and group conversion, required to heal America and the world of racism will demand surrendering power and privilege to the poor.

This will unsettle the balance of power and require giving those on the lower rungs of the economic and social ladder access to upward mobility.

In the United States racism, the prison-industrial complex, rising gun violence and drug use in the black neighborhoods all continue to persist because there are many white people who are benefiting from this state of affairs.

A Church where we black people can lament and be heard

The good news in all these is that George Floyd's death seems to have shaken the world from its slumber. There is a feeling of change in the air.

The Catholic Church in United States and around the world must seize this moment of grace.

The global Church and the American Church must take a stand with the poor and the downtrodden marginalized blacks in America and many other Western societies, as well as in Latin America and on the African continent.

The Church must be on the side of this movement of the Spirit in present history by being on the side of truth, justice, healing and restoration of those whose ancestry has been one long history of blood, death, destruction and tears.

In the past, the Catholic Church has often been a latecomer in some of the most important social progress made in the world for liberating Africans. The Church has often been cautious, afraid and reactionary.

For instance, the reason the Catholic Church in the United States failed African-Americans during the slave trade was because it stayed mostly neutral during the anti-slavery movement. Some Catholic religious orders even continued to hold on to the enslaved peoples it owned.

The Catholic Church failed to correctly read the signs of the times. The Roman Church was more concerned with protecting her institutional standing in a country where she was still struggling to win acceptance as a minority religious group in a society dominated by Protestantism.

However, the universal Church also had another internal problem. The slave trade was not simply an American problem, even if the United States had the highest number of African slaves in the world, which was connected to the political, social and economic convulsion that later led to the Civil War.

The heart of the internal ecclesial problem was how the Church understood social movements and calls for human rights at a time when Europe was also convulsing with nationalistic sentiments that were upending the powers of the papacy.

The internal problem of the Catholic Church during the abolitionist movement has to be seen within a larger political balancing game.

The Church sought to remain relevant in world history by not ruffling any feathers, particularly in countries like France, the United Kingdom, Spain and Portugal, while retaining its own influence in Europe and the rest of the world.

All these countries had different imperialistic and economic stakes in the slave trade, colonialism and the missionary enterprise of the Churches from the West to the rest.

The lives and future of blacks became a mere bargaining chip in the balancing of the interests that have often been referred to as the battle for "God, Glory and Gold".

Even after Gregory XVI published *In Supremo Apostolatus* in 1839 the US bishops did not publicly and clearly fight for the abolition and emancipation of blacks.

The American Church leaders could not come to terms with whether the evils of slavery should be interpreted as a moral issue or a political problem.

Many of them saw slavery and the slave trade as a political issue and sought the path of compromise and silence, while moralizing with a view to changing the minds of the South and all pro-slavery diehards.

The Catholic Church concentrated its efforts on providing spiritual and social support to enslaved and formerly enslaved people.

But it did little to fight for the dismantling of the structures of racism that grew out of slavery. It was not the leading voice in calling for an end to lynching, promoting the Civil Rights movement or fighting for desegregation.

What is obvious in the light of recent events in the world following the death of George Floyd is that the Church can no longer work within this status quo characterized by systemic racism, institutionalized violence, internalized racism, implicit bias, health inequity, environmental racism and the flagrant abuse of the dignity and rights of African-Americans and blacks in many parts of the world.

It is against the Gospel to make compromises with political systems, institutions or global structures that promote racism or that tolerate unjust systems and all forms of intolerance and bias against people because of who they are.



Everywhere many blacks are embracing Catholicism

However, African-Americans are embracing Catholicism today. Their numerical presence in the Church has grown from about 300,000 in 1940 to 3 million today, outnumbering one of the oldest historical black churches, the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

The same exponential growth in black Catholicism is happening around the world in Africa, Latin America and among indigenous peoples in places like Brazil, Peru and Canada.

What is evident is that blacks throughout the world have embraced Christianity in large numbers, and a significant number of them have embraced Catholicism.

But one needs to ask some important and troubling questions.

What does it mean to be a black Catholic? Has belonging to the Catholic Church significantly altered the fate and fortune of blacks throughout the world?

Has the Church offered them a sacred canopy and a healthy space where they can lament their past, bemoan and show anger at their present condition and be heard? Has our Church become a champion for the emergence of a new agency to reverse the course of history?

As Matthew Cressler points out in *Authentically Black and Truly Catholic*, "Black Catholics bore the brunt of racism in their own churches."

What this means is that the Church did not protect Catholics in America or elsewhere from racism, racial profiling bias and discrimination.

This is why Pope John Paul II's calls to white people to acknowledge their collective responsibility for racism, and Pope Francis' renewed call for a rejection of this mindset of racism, are not enough.

The sad truth is that most blacks carry the wounds of racism wherever they go. In the ideological battles that characterize racial discourse in America and the rest of the world, black Catholics look to their Church.

The expect it to be a sign of contradiction and a site for hope, which can reverse the trajectory of the unacceptable history that has been the lot of blacks in world history.

The question is: Is the Catholic Church prepared to lead humanity in reimagining a better world for blacks, and all peoples, in our longing for a new heaven and a new earth?

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