



BISHOP'S REFLECTION
July 2020
"God Bless America, the Beautiful"

My Dear People of God,

As we continue to move forward in our Sunday celebration of Mass, I want to thank the priests and their parish teams for coordinating the necessary safety precautions in order to have Mass. Also, I want to thank you, the parishioners, for your patience and cooperation, as we move forward in the midst of the presence of this pandemic.

As we welcome the summer months and, hopefully, enjoy some sort of vacation, we find ourselves face to face with the sin of racism. Once again, it has raised its ugly head and challenges us to address the impact it has had, and continues to have, especially, upon the African American community.

With the tragic and shocking death of George Floyd, at the hands of law enforcement, protests and demonstrations have taken place across the nation. Some have been peaceful, and others have been infiltrated and hijacked by lawlessness and violence. Many resulting in manifestations of out-of-control anger, disorder, vandalism and desecration. All this has led to destruction, physical injury and death.

There is a strong indication that this is not just some short-lived experience of civil unrest and cultural upheaval. There is an urgent need to read the signs of the times. One can see there is a battle raging between light and darkness, order and disorder, a spiritual disorientation. Our society and culture is in need of Jesus and his Gospel. We are called to live our lives according to his teaching: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Our society is in need of hope and healing. It is in need of our witness!

This year, as we celebrate the 4th of July, let it be a day of prayerful reflection. A lot has happened in just a few months. There is a need for prayer and action, now more than ever. It is a time for us to educate ourselves, our youth and children about the *sin* of racism. I encourage you to visit the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops website (usccb.org) for resources that can assist in informing and educating our families, parishes and school communities in regard to racism.

Now is the time for us to listen to each other and to dialogue. This is key in understanding the lived experience of our Black brothers and sisters in regard to racism. It is time for us to share each other's concerns, fears and hopes for the common good. When we agree to come together as brothers and sisters, then, the door of healing can be opened to us.

As we pray and ask for God's intervention, we must not forget to do our part. We need to bend, not one knee, but *both* knees in repentance for our sins against life; against the respect and dignity of life. "Life is not disposable, it is not to be discarded," said Pope Francis, in regard to the mentality of our throwaway society. It is a mentality that effects lives, be it: Black lives, or other ethnic lives, or lives of those facing all types of discrimination, prejudice, injustice, deprivation of human dignity and respect, including life in the womb!



Let us pray for mercy, and conversion of heart, in these troubled times. Let us continue to believe, adore, hope and love our God above all things and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Together, let us uphold the social teachings of the Church, so as to work toward alleviating the sin of racism in our day and age.

Let us, in reparation, ask God's mercy for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope and do not love Him. As the Blessed Virgin Mary mentioned to the Fátima seer, Lúcia: "It is necessary that they(we) amend their(our) lives and ask pardon for their(our) sins." Our Lady's last words to Lúcia in 1917 echo true to us in 2020, "Let them offend Our Lord God no more, for He is already much offended."

Brothers and sisters, let us strive to follow the lead of Jesus and be formed by the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit. As we celebrate Independence Day, let us, throughout the month of July, give thanks to God for the gift of *freedom* and *religious liberty*. Let us pray for healing during this time of division within our nation. This 4th of July, let us ponder the words found in our patriotic hymn, America, the Beautiful:

"America, America, God *mend* thy every *flaw*, confirm thy soul in *self-control*, thy *liberty* in law."

"America, America, God *shed* his *grace* on thee, and crown thy good with *brotherhood* from sea to shining sea."

Father of Mercy, heal our nation.

Our Lady, Patroness of the United States of America, pray for us.

God bless America!

In the Peace of Christ,

Bishop Cotta