

STATEMENT ON RACISM

Preface

On August 11-12, 2017 hundreds of armed neo-Nazis marched in Charlottesville, Virginia. Our nation mourned the deaths of 32 year old counter-protester Heather Heyer and state troopers H. Jay Cullen and Berke Bates. We, the **Pastoral Council of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton** unequivocally denounce racist speech and actions against people of any race, religion or national origin. Shortly after the violent rallies, our pastor Rev. Paul Sparklin delivered a poignant homily on “*The Sin of Racism*” at the weekend Masses. At that time, he invited each of us to join him in the effort to eradicate this social and cultural evil. After much prayer, study and dialogue, the Pastoral Council, with input from the parish staff and committees, drafted a parish position statement. Together, we are invited to be an active participant in continuing to take a closer look at racism by following the loving example of Our Risen Lord.

Position Statement

Racism is a complex social problem. The Catholic Church has a very important role in speaking against evil in the world. Racism of all kinds - *anyone expressing hatred for or taking action against another because of their race, religion or national origin* – is considered an intrinsic evil. In moral theology, this means it can never be justified. This goes beyond politics. There is only one side. We can only stand against it. It falls to the Church to be the conscience of the nation - - that is our task. It requires spiritual and pastoral leadership. The problem of intolerance must be confronted in all its forms.

We are concerned about the treatment of all minority groups. The Church is one that reaches out and welcomes all people to recognize the dignity of every person, and to address the challenges - - both subtle and obvious - - posed to that dignity by various kinds of racism and discrimination.

Discrimination continues today through “ignorance” and the “silent support of other expressions of discrimination” requires social action. Intolerance and racism will not go away without a concerted awareness and effort on the part of everyone. Responding to the sin of racism as a parish community must begin with each of us examining our own selves on this subject. We need to be open to a change of heart. We should ask God’s Spirit to remove from us all traces of racial prejudice. We should avoid racial stereotypes, slurs and jokes. We should correct any expressions or racist attitudes among family members, friends, and co-workers. We should seek opportunities to know and learn from people of other races.

Resisting racism also means examining our basic instincts and assumptions about race. How do these assumptions shape our daily lives? What are our fears about people of other races? In what ways do we act differently when we drive through certain neighborhoods? How do we carry ourselves in situations where we interact with people of other races? Are we able to see Jesus in people whose skin color is different from ours or whose language is different from ours?

Racism is an attack on the image of God. The fact that we are created in the image of God should remind us that each person is a living expression of God that must be respected and preserved and never dishonored. *“You shall love your neighbor as yourself”* (Mk 12:28-31). *“You cannot love God and hate your neighbor”* (1 John 4:20). We must create the spaces where we can listen to one another, learn from one another, and truly love one another as children of a loving God. *“Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another”* (John 13:34). This is Christ’s command to us; it is the heart of Christian life. The sin of racism is the opposite of love. God created one race of people - - the human race. And what God created was good.

The Catholic Church is very clear: racism and every form of discrimination is incompatible with God’s design. The fight against racism concerns everyone. We need to be a part of the solution.

