



AUGUSTINIANS OF THE MIDWEST

Province of Our Mother of Good Counsel

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June 2, 2020

Dear Friends,

I have felt compelled these past few days to offer a few reflections as we move through the double pandemic of COVID-19 and the racial disparity that continues to plague our nation.

Just when one may think that things could not get worse in a major health crisis, it has. The tragic death of George Floyd in Minneapolis opens up the systemic wound of racism and the inequality of people of color in our country. We are not only dealing with the health crisis of COVID-19 and its contagion, but racism as a health crisis affects the collective well-being of our society. I ask myself the question, how do we interpret all of this in light of the Augustinian values (Unity, Truth and Love) that correspond to our mission in the world and especially in the United States? What is it that we can do in our respective ministerial and conventual communities to address this disease?

The acts of violence of property destruction and threats in response to the senseless killing of George Floyd that are being perpetrated puts our collective well-being in jeopardy. Although both political and media commentators have suggested that the rage is understandable, the violence is not justified. Violence in any form pollutes the current message that calls us to live in harmony with one another in order to eliminate the racial divide. It has become very risky, these past few days (and months), to even leave the security of our homes. We can remain behind closed and locked doors out of fear or we can move out of our confinement (figuratively) and (re)commit ourselves toward adopting a conciliatory posture with one another against the racial disparity that divides us as a nation and preach in favor of uniting our minds and hearts toward systemic change and healing.

We know that St. Augustine believed that Love (Caritas) is the beginning and end of all things. All the good that we do and that we are is based on our love of God and for God. St. Augustine does not separate our love for God from our love of neighbor, therefore all just systems that make up our society should be based on this tri-fold relationship of mercy and compassion.

Kathleen Bonnette, Th.D., wrote an article recently in America Magazine on May 28th entitled, "*What can St. Augustine teach us about living through a pandemic?*" I find the following quote to be applicable to the current ongoing health crisis in the U.S. of racial inequality and COVID-19.

"If we are to practice love, then, we must strive, to the best of our ability, to develop systems and enact policies that advance the common good and promote the full dignity and participation of all—an elusive goal, perhaps, but one that nevertheless demands our unceasing effort."

Thank you all for your attention. Know that I accompany all of you with my prayerful intentions. We pray for the safety of all residents of our respective cities and communities and for the first responders who are dedicated to keep us safe. Pray for me as well.

Fraternally in Christ and St. Augustine,

Rev. Anthony B. Pizzo, OSA
Prior Provincial of the Augustinians of the Midwest