



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

June 2, 2020

STATEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF WISCONSIN ON UNJUST KILLINGS AND RECENT PROTESTS

Dearly Beloved,

In this traumatic time, we join with our [brother bishops and committee chairmen of United States Conference of Catholic Bishops \(USCCB\)](#) in expressing our anger and tremendous sorrow over the recent brutal death of George Floyd and the violence that people of color have suffered at the hands of vigilantes and unprincipled public authorities across our nation. These unjust acts have unfortunately plagued our state and nation for centuries. All of us must respond with prayer, solidarity, and solace for the victims and their families, but this continuing brutality calls for even greater effort and action.

We encourage everyone to examine any attitudes of racism within themselves or others that contribute to a culture of disrespect of the dignity and rights of every human person. As noted in the USCCB statement “People of good conscience must never turn a blind eye when citizens are being deprived of their human dignity and even their lives. Indifference is not an option. ‘As bishops, we unequivocally state that racism is a life issue.’”

“Too many communities around this country feel their voices are not being heard, their complaints about racist treatment are unheeded, and we are not doing enough to point out that this deadly treatment is antithetical to the Gospel of Life.”

May God change all our hearts, allowing us to recognize, cherish, and defend the dignity of every human life, for everyone is made in the image and likeness of God and deserves to live free from fear and harm.

We support and join with those who speak out against injustice and applaud efforts to peaceably protest against the murder of George Floyd and others who have been struck down by prejudice and abuse of power. We echo the call for swift and certain justice and we condemn the actions of those who resort to violence, which only further damages underserved communities and distracts from the issues that need our attention.

We implore, for the safety of all, that those who protest in public, especially in communities of color, take appropriate preventative measures to avoid the further spread of COVID-19. Our communities of color in Wisconsin are facing disproportionately high rates of COVID-19 infection. Needless spread will only compound challenges in these communities.

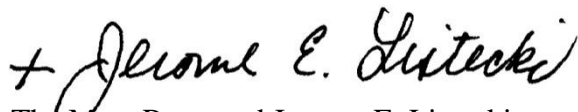
We ask our parishes to engage in formation and activities designed to address racism. One starting point is to utilize the USCCB pastoral letter against racism, [Open Wide Our Hearts](#), and the accompanying [study guide](#). We ask our pastors and lay people to reach out personally to their fellow parishioners who face daily discrimination and who are experiencing so much sorrow and pain. As the recent USCCB statement notes, we must “encounter and more authentically accompany them, listen to their stories, and learn from them, finding substantive ways to enact systemic change.”

We urge Catholics to investigate what resources and organizations exist locally to combat racism and to assist those most impacted by it. Please reach out to and share resources, especially during these uncertain times, with houses of worship and other groups within our communities of color throughout Wisconsin.


We pray for the countless lives brutally ended by acts of oppression. We pledge to their families and communities that the Catholic Church stands with them and will redouble its efforts to hold perpetrators accountable, to advocate for just laws, and to offer our time and our treasure so that all may live in freedom and dignity.

May we all be vigilant in searching for the face of God in every encounter and interaction, following our Lord’s command to “Love one another.”

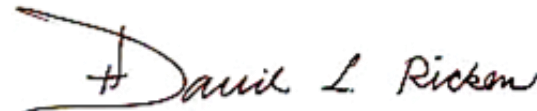
Sincerely Yours in Christ,



The Most Reverend Jerome E. ListECKi
Archbishop of Milwaukee



The Most Reverend Donald J. Hying
Bishop of Madison



The Most Reverend David L. Ricken
Bishop of Green Bay



The Most Reverend William P. Callahan
Bishop of La Crosse



The Most Reverend James P. Powers
Bishop of Superior