



THE RT. REV. STEVEN ANDREW MILLER, D.D.

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BISHOP OF MILWAUKEE

## REFLECTIONS ON THE EVENTS IN CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA

Dear Friends in Christ,

This has been a difficult reflection to write, difficult because the events of last weekend happened in a park I used to sit in with a clergy friend to discuss life and ministry and not far the hospital where our younger daughter was born. I know well the beautiful grounds of the University of Virginia, a community dedicated to knowledge and education that became the marching grounds for people spewing hate. I have to admit that I find the whole thing simply unbelievable and I keep wondering how did it come to this.

The answer to my question is simple and complex. I will leave the complexities to the pundits and historians. The simple answer is sin; human beings misuse the freedom God has given us and make wrong choices that are not in accordance with God's will of love and the truth that every human being is created in the image of God. One of the core definitions of sin is separation—separation from God and separation from each other. Such is the legacy of slavery, one manifestation among many of the sin of racism in this country, a sin that clings so closely and continues to affect us. The first step in overcoming this is to acknowledge the reality of systemic racism and our participation in it and ask God to create in us hearts and minds that are conformed to his will of love.

I would remind you of my Convention address in 2014, in which I stated, "One of the things that I have become aware since my return to the Upper Midwest 11 years ago is how incipient northern racism is. We delude ourselves with the story that our ancestors fought to free the slaves and end slavery, while we enforce an economic and opportunity segregation that insures that very little will change.... We have a long way to go before Dr. King's dream that a person will be judged not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character is fulfilled."

That statement remains true. It is now 50 years since Christians marched in Milwaukee to call a racially divided city to repentance. Today it remains one of the most segregated cities in the nation. There is still much work and repenting to do not only in Milwaukee but across our diocese and our state.

I am committed to the work of dismantling racism. That is why we have a missioner for community engagement helping our diocese to build relationships in the city of Milwaukee through a ministry of prayer, presence, and listening. I give thanks for the congregations across our diocese that are engaged in similar work. I encourage you to listen and learn from the work

being done at St. Andrew's, Madison, Trinity, Wauwatosa, and Christ Church, Whitefish Bay and to share the work your congregation is doing with others.

Most importantly, I invite you to join me and others throughout the diocese in reading the book *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson. Join or start a discussion group in your parish. This is one way we can begin to have the necessary conversations about racism, a conversation that is all too easy to avoid and imperative that we do not. More information about it can be found on the diocesan website at [www.diomil.org](http://www.diomil.org)

I am convinced that God has called the Church for such a time as this. For we are a kingdom of priests from every race, tongue, and nation called to the service and fulfillment of God's will.

Yours in Christ,

The Rt. Rev. Steven A. Miller  
Bishop of Milwaukee

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