

The Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh



April 20, 2021

Dear friends in Christ,

The trial of Derek Chauvin will likely conclude in the coming days. Whatever the result, we may see a familiar pattern. The verdict will be announced. There will be a public reaction, which will include statements from bishops of the Church. If the verdict is seen to accomplish some measure of justice, there may be muted praise; if not, there will be protest. In any case, there should be lamentation that such a trial needed to be held at all, that deaths of unarmed Black men and other people of color at the hands of police continue to occur with a frequency that shows no sign of abating.

If there is a single word we need to hear in this season of the Resurrection, if there is one essential fact established by the reality of the Empty Tomb, it is this: God does not wait for the world to come to its senses before He acts decisively to establish His Kingdom. The inauguration of His reign of justice does not depend on the decisions of earthly courts. He did not wait for Herod to be replaced, or for Pilate to be recalled to Rome; the Cross and Resurrection did not depend on the hope that some future Caesar might bring about a kinder, gentler, more just empire.

God acted in and through Jesus Christ, and in doing so, God achieved for us absolute victory over sin and death. This is the reality those who believe in Christ now know. This is the Kingdom we call home, even as we continue to dwell in this world.

I do not believe that the historic tragedy of racism in this country will be ended by any verdict in any trial. All I know is that, for Christians, our calling and our work will be the same next Sunday as it was last Sunday: to love, teach and heal.

We will still be called to stand for and with the oppressed and to love the oppressor, to call attention to systemic sin and work to correct the structures that promote it, to critique any manifestation of human supremacy, which always seeks to supplant the supremacy of Christ and Christ's Kingdom. No matter the verdict, this call and this work do not change.

So, let us not be distracted. Pray for all who continue to mourn the death of George Floyd, and pray as well for the man who killed him. Move more deeply into the world to build bridges with those who have suffered under the burden of racism over generations, and join them in the ongoing work of healing our society from this curse. Help those charged with the enforcement of law in our democracy to become fully what we know, at their best, they can be. And pray constantly that the will of the Father may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

As we continue to walk this road together, let us find our strength and our hope in the power of the risen Christ, who always goes before us.

Faithfully your bishop,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dorsey", with a small cross symbol to the left of the first letter.

(The Right Reverend) Dorsey W.M. McConnell, D.D.
VIII Bishop of Pittsburgh