

Statements from Pope Francis, Bishop Robert Byrne and the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales condemn the death of George Floyd

In times of an international crisis such as this, the Bishop and the Diocese maintain communion with Pope Francis and the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

Right Reverend Robert Byrne CO, Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle, calls on the people of the Diocese to seek the intercession of Our Blessed Lady Immaculate to obtain from her Son the grace to overcome the evil of racism and to build a just society, so that prejudice and animosity will no longer infect our minds or hearts but will be replaced with a love that respects the dignity of every person.

Pope Francis prays for the soul of George Floyd and for peace and justice in the United States of America in a statement that was issued from the Vatican City.

“Dear brothers and sisters in the United States, I have witnessed with great concern the disturbing social unrest in your nation in these past days, following the tragic death of Mr George Floyd,”

“We cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in any form and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life. At the same time, we have to recognize that the violence of recent nights is self-destructive and self-defeating. Nothing is gained by violence and so much is lost,”

“Today I join the Church of St. Paul and Minneapolis, and of all the United States, in praying for the rest of the soul of George Floyd and all the others who have lost their lives because of the sin of racism,”

“Let us pray for the comfort of families and friends who are heartbroken, and pray for national reconciliation and the peace we yearn for.”

“Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of America, intercede for all those who work for peace and justice in your land and in the world. God bless you all and your families,”

As well as prayers from Pope Francis, a further statement of solidarity from the Bishop's Conference for England and Wales was issued by Bishop Declan Lang, the Lead Bishop for International Affairs and Bishop Paul McAleenan, the Lead Bishop for Racial Justice stating that Bishops stand in solidarity with US sisters and brothers as they challenge the evil of racism and the brutal killing of George Floyd:

“We stand in solidarity with our sisters and brothers in the USA as they challenge the evil of racism and the brutal killing of George Floyd. As the US Bishops made clear: “we cannot turn a blind eye to these atrocities and yet still try to profess to respect every human life. We serve a God of love, mercy, and justice.”

“Systemic racism is embedded in our own society. The disproportionate harm suffered by BAME people throughout the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted profound inequalities,

marginalisation and injustice here in the UK. The peaceful Black Lives Matter protests taking place in our towns and cities this week reflect the understandable anger that so many people feel about this.

“As Catholics we recognise that racism is an evil which must be opposed; we all have a responsibility for actively promoting racial justice. Whenever we ignore racism or dismiss BAME people’s experience of it, we are complicit in violations of human dignity. We pray for God’s help to overcome racism in all its forms and that we might protect everyone who suffers its consequences. We are all made in God’s image.”