



June 2, 2020

Statement of the Sisters of the Order of St. Basil the Great on the Death of George Floyd

The Sisters of the Order of St. Basil the Great express deep sorrow and regret at the needless death of George Floyd. This occasion demands prayer, reflection, and urgent attention to the present moment. In a spirit of mourning we address this letter to the community.

Few symbols are as powerful as breath, and Mr. Floyd's words, "I can't breathe.", call to mind biblical precedent. In Genesis we read, "the LORD God formed the man out of the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." Thus Adam, which in Hebrew means *man*, begins his life in this moment.

There is a beautiful Easter connection to this creation account. On the Sunday of His Resurrection, Jesus appeared to the disciples and twice said to them: 'Peace be with you.' Simultaneously, "he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the holy Spirit.'" So we find breath in the foreground from the moment God created humanity to the moment of the new creation. Breath and life are inseparable.

What else do we find amidst the Risen Lord's breathing act? Peace. Of all the things Jesus could have said, he chose to greet his friends with peace—twice. The message is clear, just as breath and life belong together, so do peace and life in Christ.

We need Christ's peace now more than ever as social unrest spreads coast to coast. Righteous anger is an appropriate response to injustice, even called for, yet we must never allow it to devolve into rage. Peaceful demonstrations honor the spirit of Christian social action, while violence and theft betray it.

Those who serve in law enforcement deserve our respect and gratitude. In fact, some of the most hopeful images to emerge in the last few days include police officers marching arm in arm with protesters against racism. In order to heal the wounds of racism and injustice we cannot antagonize and alienate one another. We must find common ground and work together.

These days, weeks, and months have been long difficult. But there is hope, there is always hope. And we Sisters assert that Jesus Christ is the only true source of peace and reconciliation. Let us turn to Him now and always as we restore our communities and ourselves.

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Provincial Superior