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Praying for peace in our communities

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ the Lord:

Next Wednesday, on the 9th of September 2020, we are calling for all of our parishioners in the forty-seven Catholic parishes in this local Catholic Church of west Tennessee, to make Wednesday a **Day of Prayer and Fasting**. On Wednesday the 9th, the Catholic Church throughout these United States celebrates the Memorial of Saint Peter Claver, a Jesuit priest who worked in Cartagena, Colombia, which was one of the largest cities of the 17th century dedicated to the slave trade. Men and women, girls and boys, from Africa, were kidnapped and brought to the Americas, to be sold as slaves. It is said that before the scheduled auction of these children of God, Saint Peter Claver baptized and cared for over 300,000 held in Cartagena.

In our recent past, after the deaths of several African Americans while in an exchange with police officers or in the custody of police officers, thousands have taken to the streets of our cities, including Memphis, marching through the streets and crying out for justice and for an end to the evil of racism. Many disciples of the Lord Jesus, including many Roman Catholics, joined in these peaceful protests. But alongside this peaceful display of citizenship and discipleship, we have seen violence and a spirit of anarchy: it appears that organized groups have “hijacked” these peaceful protests to become something else altogether.

Racial strife today is palpable. And, as witnesses unto the Crucified and Risen Lord, we are called to be instruments of peace and of justice and of true reconciliation. Our work together is to seek what the Lord Jesus longed for...” that all may be one” in God’s life and love (John 17.21)”. We are called to reach out as disciples, seeking the good of our neighbor in caring for them as we care for ourselves (Matthew 7.12).

Saint Peter Claver was a priest from present day Spain. He ministered to Africans that were kidnapped, beaten and sold in present day Colombia. He was, in his work and his heart, what we are to be, Christian ministers of peace and of justice and of true reconciliation. Let us use his Memorial on the 9th of September, as a day of Prayer and Fasting, to re-dedicate ourselves to the Lord and His Church and to a citizenship that seeks the common good of all.

+ David P. Talley

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