



DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO

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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

June 1, 2020

Bishop Jaime Soto Calls for Prayer in Wake of George Floyd's Death and Civil Unrest

I am heartbroken to see the fabric of the Sacramento community torn by bitterness and anger. I call on the Catholic people of the Diocese of Sacramento to join me in asking the Lord Jesus to strengthen our hearts, to mend our city, and to heal our nation.

We pray for the eternal rest of George Floyd and for the consolation of his family. We implore that justice be rendered in this case. And we ask that the Lord Jesus comfort and heal all those who have been harmed by the ensuing civil unrest.

The repugnant killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis has provoked outrage and disgust throughout our society. Men and women from all walks of life, including police officers, are united in their disgust and anger at this senseless death. No justification can absolve the killing of Mr. Floyd. We must together demonstrate our abhorrence for violence – all violence.

No excuse can explain the reckless destruction and looting that has surged in our community. The destruction and violence on our streets will not remedy the injustice of Mr. Floyd's death. They simply add more innocent victims to this tragedy. Each act of violence and destruction deepens the wounds to our city and nation, and perpetuates an ugly cycle of anger, violence, and reckless reprisal. It is like a contagion infecting ever more hearts with rising fear, hatred, and bitterness that harden the heart.

Hardheartedness is a condition of the soul that is not easily remedied. Political solutions will not soften it. More social programs will not soothe it. These endeavors must be deployed with good reason, but more than these are needed.

As we strive to lift ourselves from the wreckage of these past days the medicine our souls need is prayer. This is perhaps out of fashion today, but it is a timeless source of hope. We must ask the Lord Jesus to keep us from a hardness of heart.

Pray that the Lord deliver us from indifference. Unlike physical-distancing that can save lives, indifference is a moral-distancing that demeans lives. To the ancient biblical question, "Am I my brother's keeper?", the answer must be yes. (Gen. 4.9)

Ask the Lord to free us from fears that close our hearts to others.

Petition Christ to fill our hearts with His tender mercy so that there is no room for bitterness.

Beg the Lord Jesus to allow our hearts to see one another more clearly and remove the blindness of racism that can afflict any of us no matter the color of our skins. The first letter of St. John

reminds us, if we do not love the brother we *can* see, how can we love the God we cannot see? (I Jn. 4.20) Jesus assures us only the pure of heart can see God. (Mt. 5.8)

We now begin the month of June, dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This image of Christ shows a pierced, wounded heart surrounded by a crown of thorns. The sorrowful passion inflicted on the Lord did not harden His heart. The Sacred Heart of Jesus is an everlasting fountain of tender mercy. The past days have brought to light many wounded hearts and wounded more hearts besides. Let us together ask the Sacred Heart of Jesus to give each of us a heart like His.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jaime Soto", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

+Jaime Soto
Bishop of Sacramento