



# Catholic Diocese of Saginaw

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6/4/20

Dear Catholic School Community,

I write to you today as I reflect on the protests that have spread across our country and around the world over the past week. As a Catholic, I believe that life, from natural conception to natural death, should be respected and valued. Unfortunately, this belief was not displayed during the arrest and subsequent treatment of George Floyd. In a recent [statement](#), Bishop Gruss commented that “George Floyd’s life was taken from him in a brutal way with total disregard for his human dignity as created in God’s image and likeness.” I hope that you will join me in praying for all those affected by the death of George Floyd.

As a student of history, I cannot help but draw connections to our past. (My undergraduate and one of my graduate degrees is in history, with a focus on the study of enslaved people.) I have always felt that history demonstrates the best and worst that mankind can be. It allows us to see what we are truly capable of. I have continually shared this sentiment with my students and challenged them to reflect on how their seemingly small, mundane, choices can make our school, city and country a better place for all. As we push deeper into our history, beyond the headlines and bold font that we recall from our textbooks, we will see that even the smallest actions taken by community members have the potential to change lives. I see this occurring across our nation. We are truly blessed to live in a country where we have the right to peaceful protest. I share the feelings [expressed](#) by Archbishop Gomez, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, that the “violence of recent nights is self-destructive and self-defeating. Nothing is gained by violence and so much is lost.”

As a Catholic educator, I cannot help but reflect on the role that our Catholic schools do and can play in educating children and young adults as it relates to social justice. Bishop Gruss recently stated that racism “is a moral problem that requires a moral remedy – a transformation of the human heart – that impels us to act.” Our schools are, can and must be a catalyst in this transformation. I have had the pleasure to work in an environment with students from eight states, seven countries, over 70 different middle schools and multiple social-economic and ethnic groups. I have witnessed the impact that a committed group of educators, along with support from the school community, can have. I look forward to working with all our schools and educators across the diocese to be a part of the moral remedy that Bishop Gruss has called for. I hope that you will join us in this effort.

Christ is at the center of our Catholic schools and He has provided us with so many examples of how we should treat and serve others. He instructed Peter to sheath his sword, He washed the disciples’ feet and He calls us to love others as He loves us. Our faith and its core tenants, including respect for life and social justice, permeate our school day, instruction and interaction with one another. The moral component of a faith-based education is an essential part of our mission. It is vital to our students’ long-term development and success. The lessons educators in Catholic schools impart, with the help of parents and guardians, are not limited to the classroom. These lessons are intended to be carried by our students into adulthood as well as into the larger community. The impact we have on our students in this area will surpass the value of a grade point average, state championship, and/or college scholarship. Current events serve as a reminder of the importance of this work and call us to, in the words of Abraham Lincoln, be “dedicated to the great task remaining before us.” Thank you for sharing in this mission with me.

Respectfully,

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