



August 17, 2017

Dear Brother Jesuits and Friends in Christ,

In the wake of the tragic and deeply disturbing events in Charlottesville, Virginia, last weekend, I write to exhort us all to deepen our prayerful commitment to healing racial divisions and eradicating the racism and prejudice so sadly present in our country and the contexts in which we serve. While the racism, prejudice, and violence on display at Charlottesville are extreme examples, our ministries in the Midwest and Great Plains are no strangers to these evils, both explicitly expressed and structurally embedded into everyday life.

Responding to Charlottesville, Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston and President of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops stated: “The abhorrent acts of hatred on display in Charlottesville are an attack on the unity of our nation and therefore summon us all to fervent prayer and peaceful action. The bishops stand with all who are oppressed by evil ideology and entrust all who suffer to the prayers of St. Peter Claver as we approach his feast day. We also stand ready to work with all people of goodwill for an end to racial violence and for the building of peace in our communities.”

In this spirit, I share with you a statement developed by an ecumenical group of Christian ethicists, including many theologians serving at Jesuit universities, entitled “A Statement from Christian Ethicists Without Borders on White Supremacy and Racism” available on the Daily Theology website ([click here](#)). I have attached my name to this statement as provincial of the USA Midwest Province of the Society of Jesus because I believe it articulates well how we are called to reflect on these sinful, painful realities in light of our gospel and tradition. I encourage us to share this statement with colleagues and those with whom and for whom we are in ministry as companions of Jesus. To be silent in the face of evil risks being complicit in it. Let us each discern ways on our campuses as well as in our parishes, retreat houses, other ministries, and local communities to embolden our individual and collective voices for reconciliation and the dismantling of racism.

Reconciliation is at the heart of the gospel, of the mission of our church, and of Jesuit ministry. Decree 1 of GC 36 calls us to be companions of Jesus in a mission of reconciliation and justice. May we redouble both our prayer and efforts in the service of our individual and corporate conversion of minds and hearts away from the sin of racism towards the beauty and truth that all human beings are made in the image and likeness of God.

Sincerely in Christ,

(V. Rev.) Brian G. Paulson, S.J.
Provincial