
Catholics protesting in front of the White House. Card. O'Malley: "Racism is a social and spiritual disease that kills people."

(from New York) Last night hundreds of people were still demonstrating in front of Lafayette Park, near the White House. This time, however, they were not young people with raised fists, but rather religious men and women religious, priests, lay people and the two auxiliary bishops of Washington. *There were no Black Lives Matter signs but rosaries and images of Our Lady of Guadalupe and Oscar Romero.* No shouting but prayers for peace and justice, biblical readings, chants and the names of all African Americans read out loud, starting with George Floyd, who died as a result of racial injustice. *"What we're seeing these past couple of weeks is not the nation that we want, the America we believe in,"* Father Ejiogu, a member of the Society of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart, who helped organize the event, said in an interview with Catholic News Service. "America is torn apart by pride, racism and injustice. So, we want to use this opportunity to ask God to reconcile us." Father Ejiogu stressed that the purpose of the event is the recognition that all lives matter, "black lives matter, white lives matter, Spanish lives matters, Asian lives matter, all lives, yes, but there are a few of those lives that seem to feel that they do not matter. "We really believe in the dignity of every person," said a Franciscan nun attending the public gathering: "We just thought it was important to come down and show support and solidarity with our brothers and sisters. It's true that all lives matter but I think in our country, we have a history of racism so that's important that we recognize that." *Over the past weekend, many bishops, priests and parishes hosted online encounters and prayers, and even during Mass, homilies and pastoral letters were read, openly inviting people to take practical steps against the "deep sin of racism" and to celebrate the diversity of the United States as a non-divisive heritage.* In Florida, Pennsylvania, Michigan, California, while the bells rang for eight minutes and 46 seconds, bishops and priests remained silent, some on their knees praying for racism to be overcome. All the demonstrations were a response to the murder of George Floyd, an African-American man who died as an officer pressed a knee on his neck. In Boston, Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley asked for [his letter](#) to be read in all parishes that describes

racism as a "social and spiritual disease that kills people".

"As a nation we abolished slavery legally - the Cardinal writes - but we have not dealt with its enduring legacy of discrimination, inequality and violence." Cardinal O'Malley recognized the Catholic Church's "historical complicity in slavery" and underlined every effort must be made to ensure genuine healing processes between people of different races, nationalities and religions. "Going forward, the reality of racism in our society and the moral imperative of racial equality and justice must be incorporated in our schools, our teaching and our preaching", His Eminence said. "We must uphold the commitments to equal dignity and human rights in all institutions of our society, in politics, law, economy, education." *Referring to the death of George Floyd as a "murder" "at the hands of four rogue police officers", the archbishop of Boston condemned racism "as an evil and moral cancer."* "The killing of George Floyd is painful evidence of what is and has been at stake for African Americans – the failure of society in too many ways to protect their lives and the lives of their children. The demonstrations and protests of these days have been calls for justice and heart wrenching expressions of deep emotional pain from which we cannot turn away", wrote Cardinal O'Malley. "They call us to affirm the inestimable value of every person's life. They call us to redouble our commitment to foster respect and justice for all people. They call us to uphold and defend the truth that Black Lives Matter", concludes the Cardinal in his letter.