



KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS
District of Columbia State Council

June 5, 2020

My Brother Knights of the District of Columbia,

Since the senseless and brutal murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, alongside numerous other black men and women across our cities, our country has been wrought with righteous anger in protest and unrest. This is not the first time that we have seen black communities in pain, scared that what happened to George might happen to their father, son, grandson, or brother. [Pope Francis reminds us](#) that *“we cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in any form and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life.”*

Amid the unrest in the District of Columbia, the President and First Lady visited the Order’s Saint John Paul II National Shrine. This event, while seemingly related in proximity to our national pain, was pre-planned, and unrelated in context. No Officers from either the Supreme Council or State Council were present at the event. It was planned many weeks ago by the White House as a way to commemorate the anniversary of the Sainly Pope’s visit to Poland in 1979 and to coincide with the signing of an Executive Order on International Religious Freedom which was instead signed at the White House the same day. While we stand for religious freedom in our country and around the globe, the character of the visit changed given the President’s inappropriate photo opportunity outside of St. John’s Episcopal Church the day before.

The Saint John Paul II National Shrine, while owned and operated by the Knights of Columbus, is not managed by the DC State Council. Therein, the DC State Council was not aware of and did not have any input as to the Presidential Visit which took place on Tuesday.

As DC Knights of Columbus, we stand for **unity**, which is what has inspired us to welcome all Catholic Men, regardless of their race, into our ranks for generations. We have heard from Brother Knights and families throughout the district who are hurting, upset, and angry at the events of the last few weeks. Today, we stand united with them. Racial justice is a pro-life issue - the equality of every man and woman is at the core of what we believe and who we are as Catholics. At this time, we pray for unity, especially within our Order and our District. Beginning on Sunday, June 7, and concluding on Monday, June 15, Knights of Columbus around the country will be praying a [Novena for National Unity & An End to Racism](#). Please join us as we pray and work to expel the sin of racism and hate from our hearts and our society.

We remain, as we always have, in solidarity with our Church, her priests, and her bishops. We will continue to work with the Archdiocese and our parishes to advance the mission of our

soon-to-be-beatified founder Fr. Michael J. McGivney. As DC Knights, we are committed to serving in every community throughout the District. In the following weeks and months, we will be in dialogue with members of the Community to discuss their thoughts and feelings regarding recent events, which we hope to be able to use to change the way we approach racial justice in our community.

We are Christ's Brother. We wear His Name. We **must** bear this Cross.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., during the March on Washington in 1963, told us that "*Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood.*" It is still that time. We must work together, and move forward committed to the principles and ideals that we originally joined the order for - to be our brother's keeper.

Fraternally,

Brandon J. Brown
State Deputy

Christopher Pierno
State Secretary

Le N. Nguyen
State Treasurer

M. Fred "Jazz" Armstrong
State Advocate

Nicholas S. C. Shields
State Warden