



The Bishop's Pastoral Letter to the Diocese of Kentucky

July 9, 2016

We receive you into the household of God. Confess the faith of Christ crucified, proclaim his resurrection, and share with us in his eternal priesthood.

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 308

Beloved Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

I write to you following the unholy hate and racism, violence and death experienced in our nation these last weeks, with the killings in Orlando, St. Paul, Baton Rouge, and Dallas weighing especially heavy on my heart. Also weighing heavily is the truth that I must do more in response.

In the liturgy of Holy Baptism, once the candidate has been baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and then anointed with the oil of chrism, sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked as Christ's own forever, the people of God welcome the newly baptized with the promise stated above.

Throughout the history of God's people, priesthood, both in terms of the ministerial priesthood and the priesthood of all believers, has been marked by sacrifice, the sacred act of rendering to Almighty God an offering. Sacred stories and writings in the testaments of the Holy Scriptures describe how both individuals and the faith community make such offerings. The history of the Church is filled with moments of sacrifice, as well as journeys unfolding over years that were filled with sacrifices offered to God. The promise that God makes to us is that every genuine act of sacrifice brings God's vision for creation closer to being realized on earth.

For disciples of Christ Jesus, faithful authentic sacrifice creates change in heart and mind and action. The Holy Eucharist is such a sacrifice, for in and through the Church's sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, the sacrifice of Christ is made present and we are united to his one offering of himself. (The Book of Common Prayer, p. 859) In the words one Eucharistic prayer: *And here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, our selves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice unto thee.* (BCP, p. 336) And in another Eucharistic prayer the power of the sacrifice is

proclaimed with the words: *Deliver us from the presumption of coming to this Table for solace only, and not for strength; for pardon only, and not for renewal.* (BCP, p. 372).

Sacrifice. What am I willing to offer...? No, what must I offer, what does the life and death of my Lord and Savior, what does my faith in Jesus Christ require that I sacrifice, in order to be changed so that through my participation in the life and mission of his Body the Church, the reign of God is built?

The sacrifice of Christ on the cross has defeated the power of death, our greatest enemy, freeing us to confront sin in every form, no matter the apparent or actual cost. I am a sinner, saved by God's grace.

Racism is a sin. In order for me to help build God's reign, I know that I must confront racism in my heart, in my life, and in my vocation. I must sacrifice privilege and power and control that enables racism, and with God's help, transform the tools and means I have, in order to build the reign of God, that equally honors the image of God in all, respects equally the dignity of every human being, and creates justice and safety and peace.

I ask for your prayers and help that I might have the faith and courage to offer such authentic sacrifice, and know of my prayers for you and for our diocesan community as we seek to make God's vision a reality now.

May the Lord who has bestowed upon us his eternal priesthood in Holy Baptism, who nourishes us with his Body and Blood, give us the grace and power and holy courage to live faithfully and sacrificially.

Yours in Christ's love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terry" with a small cross or plus sign to the left.

The Right Rev'd Terry A. White
Bishop of Kentucky