



**SISTERS OF
ST. JOSEPH
OF NORTHWESTERN
PENNSYLVANIA**

Connecting with God ✚ *Connecting with You*

OFFICIAL STATEMENT
for Immediate Release
May 31, 2020

CONTACT: Stephanie Hall
Director of Public Relations
814/836-4203

Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania Call for Unity and an End to the Violence

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania are deeply saddened by the fatal arrest of George Floyd in Minneapolis and the resulting violence in our nation, including our community of Erie, Pennsylvania. Like other citizens, we are also experiencing feelings of frustration, fear, and anger over Mr. Floyd's death and the deaths of others from senseless, racially-motivated, extrajudicial violence.

We pray for Mr. Floyd's family and the families of all these victims that they may find comfort as they face the painful loss of their loved ones. We pray for all who have been affected by these acts. We pray for all in the community who are repeatedly impacted by the trauma of these killings. We pray for law enforcement, recognizing that the actions of a few are not indicative of the attitudes of all. We pray for the officers who must live with the outcome and consequences of their actions. We pray for unity to heal this nation's deep racial divide. We pray unceasingly, and in solidarity with all who are calling for justice and an end to the violence.

"The mission of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania is unity of neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God," states Mary Drexler, SSJ, president of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania. "Right now, our nation is hurting. We are broken and divided. We must come together and rise above the violence. As Christians who celebrate the feast of Pentecost today, we ask the Holy Spirit to descend upon us and bring us together in unity to heal."

We urge elected officials and the entire community to boldly address how we degrade or deny people their human dignity and rights. We implore our criminal justice systems and law enforcement agencies to pursue accountability and realistic alternatives to the use of deadly force. We support police training that emphasizes being guardians rather than just enforcers, that teaches respect for every individual to reduce the fear experienced by and of law enforcement. Let us act in ways that demonstrate that all lives matter.

"Social justice is an inherent part of the mission of the Sisters of St. Joseph. We stand with and advocate for all those who are marginalized and suffer from inequities and unnecessary violence," said Betsy Wiest, SSJ social justice coordinator. "But voices can't be heard amidst violent cries. There is a peaceful way to bring about justice. We urge people to take appropriate action by coming together in dialogue, by voting, and by contacting legislators so your voice can be heard."

We urge the Erie community to join us in solidarity as we pray for an end to the violence, for peaceful dialogue, and for unity of neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God.