

Archbishop Smith: Aghast!

Video imagery of some policemen killing an African-American man – while others watched – has left all people of good will stunned and outraged. I was sickened by it, and have since found myself struggling to comprehend, without success, what in the thinking of those officers lay behind doing such a horrible thing. What kind of mindset would lead to the apparently wilful termination of another man's life or dare to claim justification for the pulverization of the victim's dignity? Both the act and the way of thinking that led to it beggar belief.

Yet, as sad as it is to acknowledge, such mindsets do exist, and find expression in many different assaults on the dignity of fellow human beings, including in our own country of Canada. Implicit within the scenes unfolding in the lives of our neighbours in the United States is a call to everyone everywhere to a serious examination of conscience – individually and collectively. How do I look upon another person who is in any respect different than me? Why?

As I was thinking about the killing and the ensuing unrest, I read a passage from the Book of Job assigned for the Office of Readings in the Liturgy of the Hours (some may know this by the term “breviary”). There I found a verse strikingly relevant to our present moment: “Did not he who made me in the womb make him? Did not the same One fashion us before our birth?” (Job 31:15.) We all have one and the same Creator. We are each, without distinction or qualification, loved equally by God. We share a common God-given destiny. In the eyes of our Sovereign Lord, each man, woman and child has an inherent and inalienable dignity that in no way may be diminished by human calculation.

That is God's “mindset”. What will it take for that divine “way of thinking” to become our own? Of course, only God can enable us to see with His perspective. That we might do so, God bestows upon His children the gift of the Holy Spirit.



Pentecost Sunday Mass at St. Joseph's Basilica was livestreamed online. Lincoln Ho, Grandin Media

Last Sunday we celebrated the Solemnity of Pentecost. From Acts we heard once again the account of the Holy Spirit's bestowal upon the Apostles. "Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them." (Acts 2:3) That's the fire we need right now; not the flames deliberately being set to destroy property and livelihoods. The fire that is the Holy Spirit reduces to ash mindsets shaped by hatred, bigotry and racism in order to set hearts aflame with the same love that moved Jesus to give his life for all people. That the mind of Christ might become our own (cf. Philippians 2:5); that we might all "be transformed by the renewing of [our] minds" (Romans 12:2); and that we might thus see each and every person as a brother or sister to be honoured, respected and loved, we need the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Veni Sancte Spiritus! Come Holy Spirit! Transform our minds and hearts, and renew the face of the earth with the fire of your love!