03/06/2020

Statement from His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco on the current protests in the U.S.



Beloved Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”
Romans 12:21

Violence. Destruction. Loss of business. Loss of lives. We are just easing up on “stay at home” and “shelter in place” orders as a result of the pandemic, and now there are new restrictions across the country brought forth for another reason. The death of George Floyd was the result of inexcusable and brutal behavior. The angry response across our nation has, once again, exposed illnesses in our society that have existed for many decades, if not centuries: racial inequality, profiling, and mistrust, to name only a few. Racism is a sin. However, turning to violence and destruction in response to this tragedy is not the way for voices to be heard and change to be realized.

The greatest commandment given to us by the Lord in the New Testament is to ***“love the Lord God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength . . . and your neighbor as yourself”*** (Mark 12:30-31). If we truly understand the depth of this message, there would never be violence against one another. Rather, we would cultivate respect, compassion, and love for our fellow human beings. How sad it is that we live in the most civilized land, yet people continue to demonstrate some of the most uncivilized and destructive behaviors.

As Greek Orthodox community throughout our history, we have been the victims of racist acts. We must never respond in kind. In our collective conscience, we remember that, we marched — praying with our feet — for civil rights. There are many peaceful and lawful ways to express our opinions, our concerns, and even our outrage. The violence currently being experienced across this country brings harm to people, their livelihoods and property, and only exacerbates the situation. As George Floyd’s brother Terrence said, “Let’s do this another way.” In a world so desperately in need of the love of Jesus Christ, we must become voices of justice, peace, and unity.

I encourage all our clergy and faithful to pray the Paraklesis to the Theotokos during these unsettling times, seeking her intercessions to bring calm to our world, and grant wisdom and forbearance to all.

With Love in Christ,

+ G E R A S I M O S

Metropolitan of San Francisco