

May 30, 2020

Dear Seton Hall Law Family,

We are reaching out to each of you because as a Law School and as a family it is important that we speak up and take a stand when injustices occur – and this is one such time. As a Catholic law school with the values of integrity, loyalty and engagement it is important to recognize that simply addressing the things that happen within our school walls is not enough. Our moral imperative requires us to support each other in times of pain. Further, as members of the Law School community we must understand that “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

We are writing to you because once again many in our community are feeling the direct pain of racism. We have watched with great sadness the coverage of the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis and the nationwide protests and news coverage related to his death. The arrest and charging of former Officer Chauvin are first steps in securing justice for the unjustified death of Mr. Floyd. But that is not enough. We must eliminate the racism that pervades our society, whether it manifests itself in the actions of private individuals, the state, or the structures of our housing, education, and healthcare systems. The mandate of equal justice must be available to all.

Unfortunately, George Floyd’s death feels all too familiar and is one of many involving unarmed Black people and law enforcement. It has become a pandemic. His death, and the demise of too many others under similar circumstances has caused pain, anger, exhaustion and trauma for many in our community. While the impact of systemic racism falls heavily on the shoulders of people of color, the entire country suffers when human decency, equality and inclusivity are not afforded to everyone.

It is important in moments like this to come together as a community to share our thoughts and to listen to each other. To that end, we share with you that Law School is holding a virtual Community Conversation this Wednesday, June 3rd at 6pm. This will be a safe space to collectively talk about the unjustified death of George Floyd and others, the crisis of racism and social injustice. We will also have a moment of silence and a candlelight/cell phone vigil.

We encourage everyone to attend. This includes both those who are directly impacted and members of our community who would like to show their support by being present, listening and gaining a better understanding of the experiences of others. Positive change requires the participation of the collective.

At times of crisis, a word whose root meaning in Greek underscores judgment and choice, our Law School turns reflexively to its Catholic Christian roots. Biblical wisdom both galvanizes and consoles. Two passages seem particularly pertinent. The first is from Psalm 55 and the second from the Gospel of Matthew.

¹ Give ear to my prayer, O God;
do not hide yourself from my supplication.

² Attend to me, and answer me;
I am troubled in my complaint.
I am distraught by the noise of the enemy,
because of the clamor of the wicked.
For they bring trouble upon me,
and in anger they cherish enmity against me.

⁴ My heart is in anguish within me,
the terrors of death have fallen upon me.

⁵ Fear and trembling come upon me,
and horror overwhelms me.

⁶ And I say, "O that I had wings like a dove!
I would fly away and be at rest;

⁷ truly, I would flee far away;
I would lodge in the wilderness;

⁸ I would hurry to find a shelter for myself
from the raging wind and tempest."

²² Cast your burden on the Lord,
and he will sustain you;
he will never permit
the righteous to be moved (Psalm 55:1-8 & 22).

The Psalmist voices the anguish of the afflicted innocent and is confident the Lord stands alongside him. In Matthew 5, Jesus indicates from the outset of his public ministry the imperative of justice for the way of life he teaches and models.

⁶ "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

¹⁰ "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Please join with the rest of your Seton Hall Law School family for an hour of solidarity that is not only fitting but necessary.

With heartfelt sentiment,

Kathleen M. Boozang, Dean

Deborah R. Edwards, Asst. Dean

Fr. Nicholas Gengaro, Chaplain