



The Most Reverend Melissa Skelton

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It is difficult to decide where to start on any communique to all of you related to racism and racist acts today. Whether it's stories from here in Canada related to aggressive acts toward Canadians of Chinese, Japanese or Filipino heritage, discrimination against a First Nations man just doing his banking, the disturbing increase in anti-Semitism world-wide, or the stark images of African-American men pursued, threatened and murdered in the US—the times we are in continue to remind us that not only is racism not dead, racism seems to have become stronger or perhaps more exposed in the midst of this pandemic.

Due to my upbringing in the American South and what seemed to be its single-minded focus on the black/white race struggle, the Canadian race issues related to Indigenous Peoples and Canadians of Chinese, Japanese and Filipino heritage have been one of the most important learnings during my time in Canada. But racism is not just an American or Canadian issue. Racism is a universal human issue, a universal evil. And, of course, on account of this reality, racism is also a Christian issue.

Racism is a Christian issue because we know that from the beginning our Creator delighted in variety and created a world of astonishing diversity. Racism is a Christian issue because our faith tells us that we are all created in the image of God and as such deserve lives of safety, dignity and possibility. Racism is a Christian issue because *“there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”* Racism is a Christian issue because at our baptism we renounced *“all powers which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God”* and we pledged *“to strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.”*

And so, beloved in Christ, we stand here on the Eve of Pentecost, the story of a group of people speaking different languages who through the power of the Holy Spirit heard the same stories about the power of God's love to renew a broken

world. We stand here remembering again the long and sad stories of racism suffered by the Indigenous peoples of Canada and the acknowledgment of that racism that still exists. We stand here shaken by the stories of Canadians verbally and physically attacked by other Canadians, who, assuming that they were from China, held them responsible for the current pandemic. And we stand here holding in our heads the frightening and de-humanizing image from the US of a white police officer kneeling on the neck of an African-American man and the images of the violent protests in many cities. We stand here with all these things.

And my prayer is that we also stand here with a new resolve.

We must, we must, strengthen our commitment to working on the racism that we ourselves carry within us—for no one is exempt from racist beliefs, tendencies and actions. And we must, we must, wherever possible, stand up for and stand with our siblings in Christ who look different from us, who sound different from us, who practise different cultures from the cultures we grew up with and who suffer in ways that we must always be open, with humility, to learn more about.

God will be our helper in this work. God will be our companion in this work.

With my best wishes to all of you and to all our siblings in Christ as we celebrate Pentecost,

In Christ

+Melissa