



The Diocese of Fond du Lac

The Episcopal Church in northeast Wisconsin

The Rt. Rev. Matthew Gunter, Bishop

mgunter@diofdl.org

28 August 2020
Feast of Augustine of Hippo,
Bishop and Theologian

Dear brothers and sisters in the Diocese of Fond du Lac,

The shooting this past Sunday of Jacob Blake in Kenosha places violence, racism, policing, protesting, rioting, and looting in front of us again. There is a lot we do not know, and we expect there will be a full and just enquiry into it all. But any shooting is tragic. And given what we have seen in recent months a black man being shot in the back is disturbing.

It is also disturbing that out-of-state armed vigilantes were allowed to wander the streets after curfew, leading to the killing of two people and the wounding of another. That the shooter was white and able to walk away without interference from the police is troubling.

We know that police work can be dangerous. And most police officers intend good. Still, there are policies for the legitimate use of potentially lethal force. When we see repeated examples of excessive use of force, disproportionately toward people of color, we sense that something must change. We can appreciate and support the work that police officers do while also seeking reform for better policing practices.

Our African-American brothers and sisters report a pattern of violence and mistreatment by too many police officers. This causes grief, anger, outrage, and fear. We can disapprove of rioting, violence, and looting while also supporting legitimate protest against mistreatment. Sadly, the stories of their own experiences of mistreatment are not hard to come by from people of color. For the sake of truth and love, we need to listen to their stories.

There has been progress in race relations in our society, yet racism remains pervasive. Our diocesan Mosaic Task Force continues to work to help us listen, learn, and better understand the persistence of racism. We must reflect with rigorous honesty upon our own racial prejudices – as we do with every sinful tendency.

Whatever else we know about Mr. Blake, he is a child of God, beloved by Jesus. As Christians we are called to love him. We pray for him.

Whatever else we know about Officer Sheskey, he is a child of God, beloved by Jesus. As Christians we are called to love him. We pray for him.

As disciples of Jesus, we are called to pray and to love. We are called to be people of the truth – even when it is inconvenient. We are called to care and to seek justice – especially for the people society does not seem to care about. I call on us to commit ourselves to being such a people. Pray for peace; pray for justice.

Under the Mercy,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Matthew Gunter". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

The Rt. Rev. Matthew Gunter

Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Fond du Lac