



Franciscan Action Network

Transforming the World in the Spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare

We Must Confront America's Original Sin. The Franciscan Action Network (FAN) brings a message of Peace and Good to all on this feast of St. Maximilian Kolbe, OFM Conventual. St. Maximilian served in Warsaw when Germany invaded Poland in 1939. He and other friars sheltered 2,000 Jewish refugees. They housed, fed, clothed and protected them. Inevitably, they came under suspicion and taken to Auschwitz. Later, Maximilian gave his life so that a man with a family could be spared. It is through his intercession that we send this message.

This past weekend in Charlottesville, Virginia, Americans witnessed the horrific consequences of what has been brewing for a long time: the scourge of hatred and white nationalism. FAN condemns all forms of bigotry and racism. We call on our elected leaders to courageously speak and stand against it directly. FAN is deeply saddened with the loss of life and the injuries on Saturday and prays for all those whose lives have been tragically altered by this violence.

We pray for greater justice and peace. We also call on all Americans, especially ourselves and those who have benefited from white privilege, to look within ourselves and confront America's original sin—the sin of racism. The United States was built on the backs of slaves brought to this country from Africa against their will. Americans also drove native peoples westward, attempting to eliminate them completely. After slavery was officially abolished, African Americans were subjected to Jim Crow laws and other economic systems were set up to ensure that African Americans and other minorities did not receive the same 'leg up' that many white Americans received. Some of those economic systems are still in place today. Even if most white Americans today may not consider ourselves racist, we have benefited from these systems, whether we realize it or not. FAN asks for forgiveness from our African American and native brothers and sisters. There have been times that we have fallen short—including this weekend in Charlottesville. We have failed to stand with our sisters and brothers, including faith leaders with whom we work on a regular basis who put their lives on the line this weekend. Police brutality against African Americans continues to be a problem that many white Americans choose to ignore.

FAN has not done enough to address this issue and other issues of systemic racism. From this point forward, we vow to do better. As we acknowledge our own sin, we call on our fellow Catholics and Franciscans to also confront more directly the sins of racism and white nationalism. As Cardinal Cupich said this weekend: "When it comes to racism, there is only one side: to stand against it."