

Column092720

**Companions on the Journey**

**September 27, 2020**

**Dear Friends,**

My friends, next week is Respect Life Sunday and the homilies will focus on the need to respect life from conception to natural death and every stage in between. Those issues about protecting innocent life is without doubt one of the most important moral issues if not the most important moral issues. It is important that we understand these issues with the mind of Christ.

There are other moral issues that need our attention especially in our world today and especially in the context of our going to the polls on November 3<sup>rd</sup>. I still have very vivid memories of that summer of 1968 when dr. Martin Luther King Jr was assassinated. I remember when President Kennedy was shot. I remember when his brother was shot. I remember thinking to myself: "Is this how it is all going to end? In a hail of bullets, simply shooting and eliminating those we disagree with or whom we hate?" It wasn't. But those were dire days. I believe there has been some major progress made in the past fifty years. But the racial discord has not ended. There is still much to be done.

I don't know what it is like to grow up as a black young person or a Mexican youth or a Pakistani Muslim in America—then or now. I do have a clear understanding of the teaching of Jesus Christ. When he says: Love your neighbor, he meant each person you encounter. Be a neighbor to everyone you meet. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Love one another as I have loved you. This is what he said. This is what he did. This is the essence of his teaching and we who claim to be his twenty-first century disciples are bound to live that way.

Who of us believes herself or himself to be prejudiced? Against anyone? Against a person of another ethnicity or another racial origin? But there is still racial hatred in our country. Not everywhere but there are clearly enough signs of its existence. And before anyone feels inclined to tell me why such disdain exists, I ask you not to go there. I am not stupid or uninformed. I read and I listen. I also observe. I also reflect. And I pray. There is still racial animosity in some hearts in this country, in some institutions in this country and in some organizations in this country.

That does not mean that everyone is a racist. That does not mean that many haven't fought for many years to create a better order, a better version of the world than was handed on to us. I am not very interested in finger-pointing. I am very interested in doing the things that will change the landscape, that will enable us to link arms with those who want to make a better world too. Let us seek to find a way to connect rather than just give our knee-jerk opposition or rejection. Martin Luther King was willing to endure the violence and not respond in kind because that was the way of Jesus Christ who himself was unlawfully and incorrectly condemned to a horrific death just because some saw him as on the wrong side of what powerful people thought. My friends, we who believe in Jesus have to model and live his way in our world in this century and in this presidential race. It is most difficult in the present climate to act this way. But we have to follow the one who said: "Follow me!"

**In the peace of Christ,  
Msgr. McHenry**