

Statement from Provincial and U.S. Leadership Regarding National Protests

June 2, 2020

Dear Oblates of Mary Immaculate and Members of the Mazenodian Family,

The United States is currently living through two profound crises that have the potential to shape our society for many years – the Covid 19 pandemic and the nation-wide response to the murder of George Floyd by a police officer. These crises highlight the divide that exists in economic and social realities within American society. The economic divide is clearly evident in the long food lines and the devastatingly disproportionate impact that the pandemic has had on communities of color. The peaceful protests highlight the disproportionate effect of policing and the criminal justice system on communities of color. Furthermore, these protests have been corrupted by outside elements that abuse peaceful, protected protest to engage in criminal violence and looting.

Our Oblate charism reminds us:

We are a missionary Congregation. Our principal service in the Church is to proclaim Christ and his Kingdom to the most abandoned. We preach the Gospel among people who have not yet received it and help them see their own values in its light. Where the Church is already established, our commitment is to those groups it touches least.

Wherever we work, our mission is especially to those people whose condition cries out for salvation and for the hope which only Jesus Christ can fully bring. These are the poor with their many faces; we give them our preference. Const.

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As Oblates, our charism calls us to be messengers of affirming actions that foster an elimination of the injustices that have been clearly identified, and in some cases exacerbated, by the twin crises we currently face. This same charism invites us to be channels of dialogue and understanding that respect the complex roots of these divisions. It demands that we neither turn our faces away from nor take actions that exacerbate these difficulties. Our call is to provide a hopeful path to a just response, and ultimately to resolution. We stand in solidarity with those who engage in the just, peaceful and protected expression of these unacceptable realities. We decry those who take conscious steps to subvert and thwart such expression. At the same time, we support appropriate efforts to prevent those who abuse these assemblies to engage in illegal and counterproductive violence and looting.

As Oblates our charism calls us to stand with those who seek through dialogue and appropriate action to address these underlying differences that should not

exist. Correspondingly this same charism invites us to reject those actions that widen the divisions that separate us. Sadly, it appears that there are efforts to taint a serious dialogue that do not serve the common good, which is the core of our gospel. Most sadly there are efforts to hijack religious symbols and sacred spaces in ways that fan the flames of division rather than serving as the sign of hope, compassion, and justice. This must be rejected.

Signed:

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