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Statement on 50th Anniversary of Civil Rights Act

Archbishop Kurtz

In a statement marking the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops called the legislation a "monumental step forward" but added that there is "still much work to do." Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Kentucky, said in the Sept. 9 statement that "the act itself did not eradicate the legacy of slavery, racial discrimination and injustice. In fact, there are reminders across our nation today that the embers of racial discrimination still smolder." The statement was released on the first day of the bishops' two-day Administrative Committee meeting at the USCCB headquarters in Washington;

"Fifty years ago, the Civil Rights Act offered an olive branch of hope for equal treatment and opportunities for education, employment and fuller participation in society."

it was also the memorial of St. Peter Claver, a Jesuit priest canonized in 1888 and known as the patron of African missions and interracial justice because of his work with slaves in Colombia. The archbishop stressed the need to "continue to work against the destructive influence of racism on families, religious and civil communities, employment, the prison system, housing, hunger, educational achievement and mental health." He paid tribute to men and women who made personal sacrifices and endured hardship to stand up for "racial justice against bigotry, violence, ignorance and fear" in their work for civil rights. He also said he was "especially grateful for the vital contributions of the faith community during this period," noting that many "Christians worked with and for the poor and marginalized, notably in the segregated South." Archbishop Kurtz's statement follows.

If anyone says, 'I love God,' but hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. This is the commandment we have from him: Whoever loves God must also love his brother" (1 Jn 4:20-21).

As America celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 this year, I join together with my brother bishops in recalling the heroic history of that achievement. We honor the many civic, business and religious leaders, students, laborers, educators and all others of good

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September 18, 2014
Volume 44
Number 16