

July 5, 2020 | 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

[ZEC 9:9-10](#)

[PS 145:1-2, 8-9, 10-11, 13-14](#)

[ROM 8:9, 11-13](#)

[MT 11:25-30](#)

By Thad Crouch

Jesus fulfilled some of Zechariah's prophecy by peacefully entering Jerusalem on a young donkey while Pontius Pilate entered on a warhorse with a military parade.

If we live by the Spirit and if our allegiance is to God, not ideologies, as King, then we can proclaim the Gospel of Life in the face of the culture of death. We can be just peacemakers banishing the military vehicles and weapons that are the chariots and bows of modern militarized police.

In the Gospel of Life, St. Pope John Paul II The Great wrote

"...we are confronted by...a veritable structure of sin . . . which denies solidarity and in many cases takes the form of a veritable "culture of death". This culture is actively fostered by powerful cultural, economic and political currents which encourage an idea of society excessively concerned with efficiency." [\(Evangelium Vitae, 12\)](#).

Systemic racism fits St. John Paul's description of structures of sin and a culture of death.

Systemic Racism: A system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity. [\(Aspen Institute\)](#)

German schools teach children an honest critical history of white racism against Jews and all students visit the Holocaust museum. U.S. High school textbooks largely omit systemic racism. Thus it's easy for U.S. whites to be ignorant and even resistant to the facts about racism just as people of ancient Israel resisted Amos and Isaiah's prophetic messages of social justice.

When we look at honest, factual history of racism, we see systemic racism extending into periods after slavery to today. It includes the Reconstruction Period in which KKK and other white terrorist groups killed thousands of African Americans to keep them from voting, removed state legislators and even the governor of Louisiana in coups. We see that some police departments originated to enforce new vagrancy laws that made it illegal to be unemployed.

This meant freed slaves could be arrested, jailed, and forced to work as legal slaves on chain gangs because the 13th Amendment allowed and still allows slavery for criminals. There are vast historical racist examples that most of us white Americans don't know. Some can be learned in the documentary ["13th" on YouTube](#) and the documentary series "Reconstruction: America After the Civil War," [free on PBS](#).

St. John Paul II The Great wrote that *“some threats...are made worse by the culpable indifference and negligence of those who could in some cases remedy them.”*
([Evangelium Vitae, 10](#))

Our public and Catholic schools, as well as religious education, can teach the truth of our historic and current systemic racism so that we can end historic negligence. Whites don't need to apologize for 18th-century slavery or our skin; we DO need to recognize threats to black lives and dignity matter just as we do for unborn lives. We have a preferential option for the vulnerable in our society.

Just as St. John Paul II The Great made many apologies to peoples who historically suffered at the Church's hands such as Jews, women, and Muslims, Catholic social ethicist Alex Mikulich has written in [A Just Peace Ethic Primer](#) that the U.S. Church can seek holistic witness rooted in Eucharistic memory and recognize its own need for repentance for racism. After all, we have publicly repented for child molesting.

President Johnson's Kerner Commission, responding to the 1967 riots, suggested funding programs to help African Americans get out of poverty and criticized outfitting police with deadlier weapons. One commission member stated the findings were similar to commissions formed to respond to riots in 1965, 1943, 1935, and as far back as 1919 and lamented “the same analysis, same recommendations, and the same inaction.”

If we as the Church live by the Spirit to follow our values of solidarity, the common good, and social justice rooted in the sanctity of human life and dignity as taught in the Gospel of Life, we can enact those recommendations ourselves and advocate for the government to do the same.

It will be challenging. Yet if we become humble of heart, we will come to know to the yoke of Christ is easier, more effective than militarized police, and far lighter than the yoke of systemic racism.

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