

in a

Word™

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A group of African men in white clerical robes and face masks are walking in a church aisle. The man in the center is carrying a large, ornate, multi-colored cross on a wooden pole. The church is decorated with Christmas trees and lights. The text "Lord, help the Catholic Church to not be silent in combatting racism and white supremacy." is overlaid on the image.

Lord, help the Catholic Church to not be silent in combatting racism and white supremacy.



(CNS photo/Stephanie Keith, Reuters)

“History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transition was not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people.”
-Martin Luther King, Jr.

On that infamous day, January 6, 2021, I was putting the final touches on the January issue of IN A WORD. As I sat here in Bay Saint Louis, the news exploded with the assault on the Capitol. Needless to say, I had to put that issue on hold and try to process what was going on and ask what has brought us to this violent, racist, white supremacy movement.

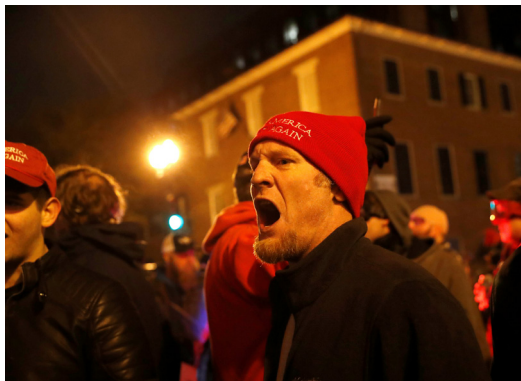
THE INTERNET

I believe that much can be traced back in time to the advent of the internet. As wonderful as the internet is one has to know how to use it. Unfortunately, far too many people have believed that anything they find on this medium is true. In short, we haven't learned how to use it! As a result, conspiracy theories, hate, and racist propaganda have found fertile ground.

Add to internet misinformation we had talk radio and then later, television talk shows where people talk and scream at each other. Lack of civility and respect for other opinions became the preferred way of acting.



(CNS photo/Ahmed Gaber, Reuters)



CNS photo/Shannon Stapleton, Reuters)

RACISM AND COVID-19

One thing is clear: **racism has always been part and parcel of the American life.** The election of Barack Obama in 2008 saw the bubbling of racism rising upward. Then with the election of Trump in 2016 and the beginnings of the MAGA movement it was as if the genie came full force out of the bottle. White supremacy became acceptable. Voter suppression, especially among minorities and African Americans in particular and constant racist attacks found on Facebook posts, along with police brutality and criticisms of the Black Lives movement were alarming.

Amazingly when COVID-19 came on the scene people were careful and yes, fearful. Yet when reports came out a few months later that the virus was attacking African Americans much more than others, the racists once again came forward calling the pandemic a hoax, refusing to wear masks or practice any kind of social distancing. When it seemed to target African Americans the white community thought they were safe. We have seen that is not so. Now over 350,000 people have lost their lives. So sad.

CATHOLIC CHURCH AND RACISM

Through the years the Catholic Church has been reluctant to stand up to racist rhetoric and behavior. Yes, the Bishops published pastoral letters on racism. In 1977 they published ***Brothers and Sisters To US***. In 2018 they released ***Open Wide our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love***. That letter reflects on the dignity of every human person and establishes the Church's moral imperative to combat racism as a **life** issue. The bishops call on fellow clergy and Catholics to help change racist attitudes and acts to conform to the moral order established by God, in which men and women of all races are honored as brothers and sisters. Yes, the letters are there but few Bishops, priests and congregations have made the words a priority.

There are priests and deacons telling congregations to vote for Trump and unwilling to challenge congregations to examine this racist behavior and the idea of white supremacy. I believe many priests and Bishops have hesitated in challenging the notions of white supremacy so that they would not alienate their big financial donors. I wish I were wrong but, what keeps them from following the message of Christ that God's love is for ALL people?

CATHOLIC COMPLICITY

The National Catholic Reporter (NCR) on January 7, 2021 published an article titled **CATHOLICS NEED TO CONFESS THEIR COMPLICITY IN THE FAILED COUP** (<https://www.ncronline.org>). It is a thought provoking article. Some passages of note are highlighted here.

“Many Americans expressed shock as they watched the violent mob smash glass and scale the walls while members of Congress cowered under desks or rushed to secure bunkers. We were not surprised. This is the culmination of what this presidency has been about from the beginning — and some Catholics have remained silent, or worse, cheered it along, including some bishops, priests, a few sisters, right-wing Catholic media and too many people in the pro-life movement.”



CNS photo/Mike Theiler, Reuters

“And what about the everyday Catholics — some 50% of them — who voted for Trump this year, after four years of incompetence, racist dog whistles

and assaults on democratic norms? Not all were at the “protest” in Washington, but many have supported organizations that fanned the flames. Too many Catholic voters were content to cozy up to Trump in exchange for tax breaks, or Supreme Court judges, or subsidies for Catholic schools.”

“Many of these folks have been shaped by right-wing Catholic media, whether rogue priests on Twitter, websites such as Church Militant or LifeSiteNews, or the Catholic media conglomerate the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN). The latter, with its veneer of respectability, has misinformed millions of Catholics worldwide with its biased news and opinion shows.”

“It must stop. If the church is to live up to the teachings of its founder, and if it is ever to be a witness to the culture, it cannot, must not, be a part of what happened at our nation’s Capitol. There must be no white Catholic nationalism. And a pro-life movement that embraces white nationalism is not a true prolife movement. Period.”



CNS photo/Stephanie Keith, Reuters

THE COMMON GOOD

We have raised many times here in IN A WORD the question - What has happened to the common good? Deacon Terrel Broussard of New Orleans, Louisiana in comments for his weekly Bible study for January 17 said:

“To whom do we listen when we decide to work against the common good? The common element in every race, gender and ethnic group is the love of God. We are all His creation. So, if we decide to violate a person, place, or thing for selfish reasons, we work against the common good. We work against the image of God. We must constantly strive to hear the call for justice, patience, peace, and love.”

Pope Francis stated that he was “astonished” by the violent attack on the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021. Pope Francis suggests that, something is not working when people take a path against the community, against democracy, and against the common good. Whose voice did the mob that attacked the U.S. Capitol hear? Did they count the cost of their actions? At least five people were killed. In a single afternoon, the mob caused extensive damage to the economic, emotional, and political stability of our nation. The Pontiff urges us to learn from these events. He suggests that we understand the source of violence, evaluate the hurt, and choose the path of restitution. We should Hear the Call! Count the Cost! And choose a corrective course!”

One would think that the rhetoric would die down, but the voices of hate are boisterous. Even as I write, our President has said he did nothing wrong. He has been enabled for the past four years in irresponsible behavior. He was impeached for a second time and rightly so. A message must be sent that such actions for any leader is treasonous.

If I sound frustrated, I most certainly am. I decry the violence but in looking back over time I am not surprised. Catholics need to wake up and follow Christ and not be silent any longer about our national sin of racism.

As we celebrate the legacy of Dr. King on January 18 let’s take to heart his words. Dr. King said *“History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transition was not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people.”*

**We must open wide our hearts.
Catholics cannot and must not be silent.**

Fr. James Pawlicki, SVD
Editor of IN A WORD



in a word or two

UPDATE: Fired EWTN host: 'I will never, ever, ever have regrets' talking about race

By Mark Pattison Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- Gloria Purvis, who was told after the Dec. 30 broadcast of the EWTN radio show "Morning Glory" that the show was canceled effective immediately, said she has no regrets using the show to discuss racial matters following the police killing of George Floyd last May.

"I will never, ever, ever have regrets for shining the light of the Gospel on a situation that was surrounded by darkness," Purvis told Catholic News Service in a Dec. 31 phone interview. Purvis, along with her co-host, Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers, are Black.

In late June, EWTN's largest affiliate, the Guadalupe Radio Network, pulled "Morning Glory" from its stations, and the show never returned.

"If I say that I believe in the Gospel, I just don't feel I can regret being faithful to him by spreading his truth in something that's a national conversation that seems to be rooted in the Gospel," Purvis said, "and they always are made as mere political issues when we as believers should be turning to the dignity of the human person and teach what the church says about racism."

Purvis said when she was given word of the cancellation by Jack Williams, EWTN Radio's general manager, she was given no reason -- nor, she added, had she ever been given any indication that things were amiss or that the show's performance was not up to expectations. In fact, according to Purvis, "that was the first time I talked to Jack -- or Jack talked to me -- in months."

Catholic News Service tried unsuccessfully to reach officials of EWTN.

Purvis said she had not given much thought to the "circular firing squad" of EWTN fans targeting one of their own. But "when you get slapped in the face or stabbed in the back, it doesn't feel good," she added.

"When you follow Jesus, you can expect to carry a cross. Carrying a cross doesn't always feel good. But I love them. There's a lot of things we do for people we love that people don't feel good about. But love transforms things that aren't likable into something that can be likable. Or bearable at the very least."

In the CNS interview, Purvis elaborated on the role faith has in racial matters. "What does it mean to have human dignity? What does it look like in policing? What does human dignity look like in trying to repair?" she asked. "These are all the questions where we can turn to our faith in God. It also tends

to move the conversation away from mere politics because we as Catholics value the dignity of each and every human person."

"That means something!" Purvis added. "We all are members of the human family. We all have a certain dignity. When you see such brutalization of a human person and the murder of a human person ... it should bring questions to us. We should be turning to our faith for answers rather than just letting political talk frame the conversation.

"We are willing to diminish the humanity of the person who's been brutalized. And I'm not just talking about George Floyd. There's also something broken in Officer (Derek) Chauvin," one of four Minneapolis policemen charged in Floyd's death, she said. "We're only looking at half the pie. Some people didn't see anything wrong with George Floyd being murdered; they didn't see anything mistaken about Officer Chauvin's behavior.

"As normative as it is to brutalize a human person like that," she continued. "And it was surprising to me to hear Catholics not even be moved by it. That is not who we are as believers."



Gloria Purvis, former co-host of "Morning Glory" on EWTN Radio, is seen in this 2017 file photo. (CNS photo/Dave Hrbacek, The Catholic Spirit)

About the front cover photo:

Altar servers recess out of St. Leo the Great Parish in Bonita Springs, Fla., Jan. 1, 2021, after serving Mass with Bishop Frank J. Dewane of Venice, Fla., and priests of the Haitian community of the Diocese of Venice. The Mass celebrated the 217th anniversary of Haiti's independence from France.

Divine Word Missionaries is an international missionary community of over 7,000 brothers and priests. In 1905 the SVDs began working among African Americans in the Southern United States. Today, Divine Word Missionaries work in over 35 parishes in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, Florida and Arkansas.

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