

## St. Ignatius Orthodox Christian Church Statement on Racism

Christ is in our Midst!

The following was sent to families in the City of Fitchburg who were victims of Racist Letters being sent to their homes:

The Parish of St. Ignatius Orthodox Christian Church is saddened to learn of the letters of hate against you and your families. Please consider these words from Metropolitan EPHREM of Tripolis, Al-Koura and Dependencies on this matter.

“We as weak and sinful humans, see some people struggle with racism as we ourselves struggle with different sins. As those who believe in Christ we reject racism and fight it with the word of the Gospel: "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).

Christ God came, suffered, was crucified and rose from the dead: all this for the salvation of the world, for the sake of every person. Therefore, there is no place for racism. Every person is meaningful before God, whether he knows God or does not know Him, whatever his nationality, race or religion. The Holy Bible affirms the dignity of every person created in the image of God. It is true that the Jews were known as God’s chosen people. This was only a historical stage when God used them as a means to come in the body and to make every nation that believes in Him His own nation. Therefore, the Apostle Paul says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).

Indeed, Christ— whether a person knows Him and believes in Him or does not know Him and believe in Him— is sown in the heart in every human and even traced upon every human face.

In his Spiritual Instructions, Saint Dorotheus says,

“Suppose a circle whose center is God and whose rays are different paths. Every person of the created world walks along one of the rays toward the center, where Christ God is (whether the person realizes it or not). He approaches his brother walking along a different ray toward God, the center itself. The more they distance themselves from one another, the more they distance themselves from God.”

“All the seed of Adam is intended for salvation, having been renewed in Christ,” according to Saint Irenaeus. Orthodox Christianity rejects every form of racism or religious discrimination. My neighbor is not only the person from my tribe, my neighborhood or my religion. Rather, he is every person that I meet along my way. Therefore we must respect strangers and accept dialogue, participation and cooperation with other ethnicities.

Christ participated in the salvation of all outcasts, such as the Samaritans and pagans like the Canaanite woman, and so we must emulate Him. Our society, government, and schools have a prominent role and responsibility in working to acquire a conscience that is not racist, through education that focuses on what is common to all people and that which is unique about the other can be a source of richness for us.”

May the All-Holy Spirit continue to guide all of us to have unity in Jesus Christ.

In Christ,

V. Rev. Fr. Basil Koory  
Pastor