



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Catholic Diocese of Charleston Supports the City of Charleston's Proposed Resolution Apologizing for Slavery and Jim Crow Laws**

Bishop Robert E. Guglielmone, on behalf of the Catholic faithful in South Carolina, is in full support of the City of Charleston's proposed resolution apologizing for the city's role in the institution of slavery and Jim Crow laws. City council members will discuss and vote on the resolution at its meeting tomorrow. "Jesus loved, accepted and embraced all people. Their race, gender or nationality never mattered to Him. Our African American brothers and sisters have suffered greatly because of slavery and Jim Crow laws. This apology is an important step in healing wounds that are still evident, even today," said Bishop Guglielmone.

This apology is important to the Diocese of Charleston because slavery and civil rights play an important role in its history. In the mid-1800's, Bishop Patrick Lynch, the third bishop of the Diocese of Charleston, owned slaves and stated it was alright to own human estate. Additionally, Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederate States of America, named him as special commissioner of the Confederate States of America. He went to Rome on a diplomatic mission to meet with Pope Pius IX and present himself as the minister of the Confederate States, in hopes of gaining recognition of the confederacy. Pius IX never met with Lynch in his capacity as special commissioner.

In the spring of 1969 during the Hospital Workers' Strike, when a predominately African American hospital and nursing home union walked out of the job citing discrimination, several Catholic priests stood in solidarity with union members. In April of that year, Fathers Richard Sanders, Thomas Duffy, William Joyce and Leo Croghan were arrested during a pro-union march on the campus of the Medical College Hospital.

In the summer of 1987, Bishop Ernest L. Unterkoefler learned the Ku Klux Klan was planning to march in downtown Charleston on Aug. 2. As a result, he hosted an ecumenical prayer service at the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist during the time of the demonstration. In a July 21, 1987 letter addressed to religious leaders in the area, Bishop Unterkoefler wrote, "Together we will pray for peace, brotherhood and love, in contrast to the bigotry and hatred exemplified by the Klan." According to an article in the Aug. 3, 1987 edition in *The News & Courier*, between 200-300 people attended the service including Monsignor D. Anthony Droze, vicar general, and Monsignor Charles Rowland, pastor of Holy Spirit Catholic Church on Johns Island. "Bishop Unterkoefler would always defend the

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people who were defenseless," said Monsignor Rowland. "He saw the KKK as a threat not only to the African American community, but also to religious freedom."

In February of 2001, Bishop Robert J. Baker wrote a commentary that appeared in *The Catholic Miscellany* in which he apologized for slavery. "Slavery was always evil because it denied human dignity," he stated. "For the wrongs made to our brothers and sisters of African descent through the institution of slavery we ask pardon and forgiveness. In response, the diocese's Office of Black Catholics recognized the regret. "As fellow Christians, our response to the wrongs done to people of African descent through slavery, racism and neglect must be that of forgiveness," was written in a letter to Bishop Baker. "It is, therefore, with great humility that the Office of Black Catholics accepts the apology you have extended."

Bishop Guglielmone asks believers of all faith traditions to pray for our city officials as they prepare to vote on this important resolution.

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