



# Black Catholic Theological Symposium

## Call to action on Police Brutality

The members of the Black Catholic Theological Symposium extend our heartfelt sympathies to the family and friends of Mr. Tyre Nichols and pray for the entire Memphis community. In addition to expressing our condolences and prayers, we make several calls for action against police violence and brutality.

***We call upon Congress to pass the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act.*** We remind the Church and society that the U.S. Congress has a history of addressing violence against persons in places the federal government rarely legislates and regulates, such as homes and other nations. We encourage Christians and people of goodwill to reflect on why our current political and moral imagination will not allow us to think about federal legislation to address violence by police officers in the public square. No group within society should have absolute authority to kill with impunity or have effectively “unqualified” immunity from criminal prosecution for murder.

***We call upon law enforcement officers to think critically and creatively about the future of law enforcement in America.*** In addition to providing sensitivity training for officers, law enforcement departments should consult with theologians and ethicists to provide non-violence training. Black Catholic theologians stand ready to aid law enforcement units in cultivating a new non-violent imagination and non-violent practices. Together we must imagine a future where law enforcement does not require the policing of bodies through lethal force.

***We call upon U.S. Catholic bishops, priests, religious orders, theologians, and laypersons to discuss, teach, preach, and witness prophetically about the Black Americans disproportionately killed by police officers.*** After the murder of George Floyd in 2020 during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Black Americans drew attention to the pandemic of police violence and brutality across America. While Black Americans account for only 13 percent of the U.S. population, they make up over 27 percent of those killed by police in 2021. We challenge all who reside in the United States to turn their attention to the poor and disinherited Black children, women, and men who suffer under police violence and brutality.

***We call upon all churches to provide pastoral care to African Americans suffering during this pandemic of anti-Black police violence and brutality.*** A [recent study at Harvard University](#) shows that police killings of unarmed African Americans can damage the mental health of Black Americans. Churches must accompany distressed Black Americans through this emotionally and psychologically distressing time. We also advise Black Americans not to watch the video of Tyre Nichols’ killing to safeguard their mental health.

Finally, and most importantly, as we continue to walk, sing, talk, and work together as children of God, we continue to pray for God’s Beloved Community. Prayer trains our moral imaginations; it connects our earthly longing to God’s heavenly desires. As Saint Paul encouraged the followers of Jesus assembled in Thessalonica and awaiting the coming of the Lord, we remind people of goodwill, especially Black Americans, to always rejoice, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).