



June 2, 2020

Dear Members of The University of Scranton Family,

We have endured months of isolation coupled with fear and sadness from the havoc caused by the coronavirus pandemic. These pains are fresh, and we have not yet had enough time to mourn the more than 100,000 we have lost.

We are faced now with a new challenge as we watched in horror at the senseless death of George Floyd. The pain caused by Mr. Floyd's murder stretches back to the very roots of our country. That pain is not relegated to history, however. It remains fresh as losses continue to be mourned, too many to be counted. On August 28, 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. uttered four simple words – "I have a dream" – in a speech for the ages that captured his life's hope for a peaceful end to centuries of striving for racial equality and justice for African Americans. George Floyd's death and days of anguished protest remind us of how much more needs to be done to achieve this dream.

I recognize that peaceful protests have been marred by violence and, tragically, more death. We must reject all violence. We must also, however, not be distracted from the clarion call to join in chorus with those who peacefully but with righteous anger shout for change in voices that "...resound loud as the rolling sea."

As a university, we seek truth. As a Catholic and Jesuit university, we insist that truth be accompanied by freedom, justice and love. St. Oscar Romero once said, "let us not tire of preaching love. It is the force that will overcome the world." At this time of strife and struggle, I ask you to join me in prayer that the love that defines our University of Scranton community focuses for us the moral mandate to be a source for peace and healing for George Floyd's family, for African Americans, for law enforcement, for our leaders, and for all who long for justice. Reading the signs of the times, we must also as The University of Scranton community examine our hearts for the shadow of racism and indifference.

Let me end with words from Cardinal Patrick O'Boyle. A native of Scranton and member of the Class of 1916, Cardinal O'Boyle championed civil rights as the first resident archbishop in our nation's capital. He encouraged the March on Washington and offered the following during his invocation on that August day in 1963 preceding Dr. King:

Send in our midst the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of all to the great truth that all men are equal in Your sight. Let us understand that simple justice demands that the rights of all be honored by every man.

May God bless the University community as we take up anew the mandate of the Society of Jesus to serve faith and promote justice.

Sincerely,

Scott R. Pilarz, S.J.
President