

‘Pivotal Moment for America’: Faith Leaders Respond to Derek Chauvin Conviction

The conviction of Derek Chauvin of second-degree unintentional murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter left many celebrating the small act of justice in a year otherwise fraught with racial injustice and mass shootings.

Faith leaders, among others, offered words of encouragement and reconciliation, stressing opportunities for growth following the verdict.

Holding Chauvin accountable for his actions is just the first step in what has become nearly a year-long national discourse on racial discrimination, police accountability and how to respond as believers.

“This may be the beginning of the restoration of believing that a justice system can work,” said civil rights leader Martin Luther King III, echoing a sentiment that many expressed Tuesday.

Bishop Shelton J. Fabre, chairman of the USCCB’s Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism said in a statement: George Floyd’s death and subsequently Chauvin’s trial, “highlighted and amplified the deep need to see the sacredness in all people, but especially those who have been historically oppressed. Whatever the stage of human life, it not only matters, it is sacred.”

He echoes the words of the pro-life organization Every Black Life Matters, whose founders started the nonprofit to advocate for every single Black life from conception to the grave. “Every phase of Black life matters to us, every plight, every barrier in Black life matters to us,” co-founder Kevin McGary

said in a *Western Journal* interview.

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry interceded heavily during the trial, his prayers ringing true as Americans continue to wrestle with racial reconciliation following Chauvin's guilty verdict:

O God, you have bound us together in a common life. Help us, in the midst of our struggles for justice and truth, to confront one another without hatred or bitterness, and to work together with mutual forbearance and respect; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God bless you.

– Presiding Bishop Michael Curry (@PB_Curry) April 20, 2021

Likewise, Atlanta-based pastor Bishop T.D. Jakes called for believers to continue their fight for equality and issued thanks to the honorable police officers.

“My prayer is that this will ignite a safer society where justice is equally allocated to absolutely everyone irrespective of socio-economics, race, religion or gender,” he said. “Thank you to the many officers who do not stoop to such atrocities and honestly work toward protecting us every day.”

Atlanta Pastor Garland Hunt urged the church to be at the forefront for unity:

“What’s a Christian response in this, and one is prayer,” Hunt told CBN News. “Number two, the church must demonstrate racial unity, racial oneness, racial healing. The church leads the way the country will follow.”

Evangelist Franklin Graham quoted John 15:12 (ESV): “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”

My prayer is that our country will come together. I hope Christians will set the example & lead the way. Jesus told His disciples, "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12). George Floyd's life mattered—every life matters to God.

– Franklin Graham (@Franklin_Graham) April 21, 2021

The soul of America is found in these attributes, Rev. Samuel Rodriguez says, the remedy of which sits squarely on believers' shoulders to embody:

"Today's decision has demonstrated yet again how far we have to go on our long march toward justice. The wounds of our past continue to bleed into our present reality and the tensions in American life—revealed by this terrible tragedy—have remind(ed) us that there will probably be another George Floyd and another Derek Chauvin," said Rodriguez in a statement obtained by Religion News Service.

"The remedy—politically and judicially speaking—is the blind eye of justice guiding our legislators and judges, but the remedy for the soul of America is empathy, understanding and love of one's neighbor whatever the color of their skin."
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