



BISHOP SERAPION

Coptic Orthodox Church الكنيسة القبطية الأرثوذكسية
Diocese of Los Angeles,
Southern California, and Hawaii
إيبارشية لوس انجلوس

June 19, 2020

“In Celebration of Juneteenth”

Today, we the Coptic Orthodox faithful celebrate the 155th observance of Juneteenth and lift our voices to emphatically condemn all racism, racial superiority, racial insensitivity, aggression and anti-Black violence.

Juneteenth is the oldest known commemoration of the announcement of the abolition of slavery in Texas on June 19, 1865 by General Gordon Granger, almost two and a half years after President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation proclamation on January 1, 1863. Six months later, the 13th Amendment was ratified in December 1865 to abolish slavery and involuntary servitude in America. Since that time, June 19 has been called Juneteenth, Freedom Day, Jubilee Day, or Liberation Day.

Our Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria is the first church in Africa, established by the Apostle of Africa, St. Mark the Evangelist. Millions of members of the Coptic Orthodox Church live all throughout Africa—not only in Egypt, but in Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, Nigeria, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Togo, Swaziland, South Africa, and many other countries.

As Christians, we believe in equality and reject all forms of discrimination and racism. Although we are many, we “are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another” (Rom. 12:5). We are all many members of this one body, even though we are many, we are one in Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12).

This day reminds us of the transformative power of human liberation initiated by our Lord Jesus Christ. For the One Who died freed us from sin (Rom. 6:7). The Author of Life has delivered us from the letter of the law, and granted us to serve in the newness of the Spirit (Rom. 7:6). Indeed, our Lord is the way of salvation, the truth that sets us free (Jn. 8:32), and the great light to those sitting in darkness. That is why our Lord came to “heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed” (Lk. 4:18).

On this day, we honor those African-Americans who challenged the institution of slavery and struggled to eradicate racism. Our Church is committed in its stand against all kinds of discrimination and any encroachments on the rights of minorities. Despite the work of Abraham Lincoln during the emancipation of slaves, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. during the Civil Rights Movement, and many others, racism is still systematically evident and subtly interwoven in many institutions. Our Church will always affirm the absolute equality of rights for all regardless of race, color or ethnicity.

Juneteenth is a time to celebrate, to gather as a family, to reflect on the past and look to the future. It is a time for education about our collective history. Most of all, it is a time to pray for real, deep change. Prayer and worship are integral to continue in this struggle against racism, and to eliminate all kinds of discrimination. Thus we call all our Coptic communities to observe this day, June 19, in prayer and to demonstrate our solidarity with our African American brothers and sisters throughout this blessed country.

Metropolitan Serapion

Bishop Suriel

Bishop Abraham

Bishop Kyrillos