

After Charlottesville, Archbishop Lori prays for justice and peace before Baltimore City Council

As he led the invocation before the Aug. 14 Baltimore City Council meeting, Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori prayed for peace and unity following the brutal display of hatred and violence in Charlottesville, Va., two days prior.

“Give us the courage to excise from our midst anger, violence, hatred and bigotry, and the underlying sin of racism that is still so prevalent in our midst,” he prayed. “Bring about that day, O Lord, when people will cease to hate their brothers and sisters because of the color of their skin, or their religion, or their nationality.”

He concluded by asking God to “help us to live together, work together and worship together, to keep each other safe, to look out for one another, to practice kindness and to experience across the lines that divide a real sense of human solidarity, for we are all your children, O God of love.”

City Councilwoman Mary Pat Clarke, who represents District 14, said prior to the meeting that the council was honored to have the archbishop open.

She said she felt “outrage” following the events of Aug. 12 in Charlottesville, beginning with a show-of-force gathering of white supremacist groups and resulting in the death of 32-year-old Heather Heyer, a Virginia resident.

Police say James Alex Fields Jr., 20, of Ohio, deliberately accelerated his car into a group of counter-protestors who were present to oppose the white supremacists. He had been photographed earlier the same day marching with the supremacist groups and faces charges including second-degree murder for the collision that resulted in Heyer’s death and injuries for nearly 20 others.

Following Heyer's death, Lt. H. Jay Cullen and Trooper Berke M. M. Bates, both of the Virginia State Police, died when the helicopter they were piloting to monitor the violent demonstrations crashed.

"There's no place in this country or in this world where we can tolerate the kind of Nazi behavior that we've seen in the last few days," Clarke said. "It's time to step up and push back, and that's what we're doing."

Earlier Aug. 14, Mayor Catherine Pugh announced intentions to remove all of Baltimore's monuments to the Confederates.

Archbishop Lori told the Catholic Review that as he watched the events of Aug. 12 unfold, he primarily felt sadness.

"Sadness that such bigotry and hatred and racism still exists and is on such display in our country," he said, "I felt great, great sadness over just the hatred and bigotry I saw, and even more sadness when I learned three people lost their lives in the midst of this mayhem."

He said he prayed not only for Charlottesville but that such violence would not reach other communities, including Baltimore.

"First of all I think we work to make our own community a place of justice and peace and equal opportunity," he said. "We work to stabilize families. Those who believe in authentic human dignity and equality need to not only speak up but also to ensure that in our relationships, in our work, in the way we conduct our affairs, we are practicing those virtues."

"I think every citizen, every believer can contribute to a just society and drown out the voices of bigotry and hatred," Archbishop Lori said.

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