

Remarks of Bernard Franklin, Ph.D.

I was born in abject poverty to Oklahoma sharecroppers, one of the most viciously exploited groups of people in American history. In brutal honesty, my family is horribly scarred and crippled as the landowners treated them less than their animals. My father has not healed from the trauma and abuse. Growing up we heard how cruel, mean and evil white people are.

I am here because of the guiding, transforming Hand of God. My mother died in 2003 from living with a deeply wounded husband. Nine months later, my loving wife died from breast cancer. We planted an urban Protestant church in Kansas City. Shortly before her death, my Elders advised I sadly walk away from this vibrant church to care for my family. Our mission was to intentionally build a multi-racial church who love God and love each other (Acts 2:44). Every Sunday we had a meal together. We attempted to meet the universal love-need of each person: to be seen, heard and known.

Three years after my wife's death, my brother, best friend and college roommate, died from a horrible automobile accident. Finally, from all of the pain and chaos, my daughter spiraled in to unimaginable misbehavior and school dismissal and was placed in a home for troubled girls.

Our new Protestant church following my wife's death was marvelous. Several families washed our laundry each week. I joined a small dinner club that has met each month since 2007.

After all of this, I was a man in great pain. I began to retreat to a Benedictine Monastery (KS). One day a monk asked why I came so often. I shared my losses with him. He hung his head, and tearfully responded, "May I walk with you in that pain?"

I did not understand the transformative power of redemptive suffering. At a crossroads, I desperately prayed for Divine support. God directed me to Jeremiah 6:16, "This is what the LORD says: "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for

your souls.” I knew immediately God was directing me to come in to the Catholic Church. Four and a half years later His sovereign, transforming hand guides me to Mount St. Mary’s University.

It’s a mystery I am here!

So how did **we** get here? When the first Africans arrived in Virginia in 1619, there were no “white” people. By 1691 Virginian’s legislated a new class of people: white people. They gave whites certain rights and took other rights from blacks. Thus whiteness, as well blackness, was born in the mindset of America. The whites were told God had made blacks inferior to whites.

This invented colonial strategy with its implicit bias that white is superior is now mainstream in our culture. It is played out every day!

When we are comfortable with a racial system that allows us to live in “safe” neighborhoods with TV’s in every room, transformation is hard. It is our fallen-human nature to want to remain comfortable.

Ninety-one percent of urban African American boys will go to bed tonight without their father’s present. This fatherlessness is not because their fathers are inferior. They were lynched, imprisoned, and thrown away. We cannot be a one issue Church, only caring for the unborn, and throwing away the living disregarding they were born in the image of God and deserving of human dignity. Additionally, when the Church closes urban Parishes, casting off the “least of these”, the message interpreted is that blacks *must* be inferior and God, too, must not care!

We can’t undo years of cultural bias in a stroke. God will not descend from Heaven and heal our region. We need to get out of our immobilizing, numbing comfort and learn to walk with others in pain.

We have much to learn from Protestants about community life. We need to stand at the crossroads and ask for the ancient path, where we will find peace. All Catholics must fight the pernicious lies that created white privilege. Will you let God transform you?

It’s a mystery ***we are here!***

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