

The events in Los Angeles County this week have broken the hearts of every caring American. We were horrified at the video-taped beatings of Rodney King. We were stunned at the verdict acquitting the accused. We were saddened by the violence which erupted. These events revealed that racial prejudice still violates the American dream.

It pains us because equality is so important to us as a nation; democracy demands it, but we still have not achieved it.

Many voices have begged for understanding, and for an end to violence and prejudice. President Bush, Rodney King himself, Bill Cosby have spoken a much-needed message of compassion for an angry nation.

Remarkably, this scenario is not too different from the events behind today's first reading from the Acts of the Apostles. After the resurrection of Jesus, the apostles began to preach. They were stopped by civil authorities. A persecution began, and many apostles were arrested. Like the scenes in Los Angeles, the early church witnessed a clash between civil authority and those speaking for righteousness. The apostles could have retaliated with violence, but instead they kept preaching the Gospel. They would obey ~~the~~ God's laws, not human laws.

My brothers and sisters, in the wake of any injustice, our obligation is to preach the Gospel. Racial equality is more than a necessity for democracy, it's a necessity for Christianity.

I'd like to suggest we begin with ourselves. Let's ask ourselves at what point we become prejudiced. Think about these questions with me: If you saw two strange black men in front of your home, what would you think? What would you do? If there were two strange white women in front of your home, would you do the same thing? If you see a bi-racial couple, what do you think of them? What do you think about their children? When you heard that a TV, a VCR, and a car had been stolen from St. Regis recently, did you form an image of the people who might have done it? What color were they? When you sold your last house, did race play a role in your decision? When you think about staying in or moving from St. Regis parish, do you think about race? Has a person of another color ever been a guest in your home? Like for dinner? Or overnight? Last fall we invited every member of St. Regis parish to nominate any parishioner, including themselves for membership on a council. The entire list of nominees we got for the parish council did not include a single black member of the parish. How could that happen here? O'Hara High School suffered several days of racial tension this spring; what have we done which enabled those attitudes to fester? Do you tell jokes about blacks, polacks, blonds, or Jews? Are you aware of how they perpetuate stereotypes in our culture?

~~Very few of us would say we're racist, but we're all prejudiced.~~
~~Very few of us can escape~~
What happened in L. A. didn't just happen; the prejudice of society begins with individuals. But if we act like the apostles in the midst of oppression, if we preach the Gospel, our community will survive and thrive.