



## Catholic Committee of Appalachia STATEMENT DENOUNCING WHITE SUPREMACY

August 15, 2017

The Catholic Committee of Appalachia (CCA) appreciates the statements made by the West Virginia Council of Churches and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in condemning the recent violent white supremacist assembly in Charlottesville, and in calling for prayers and peaceful actions. However, statements calling “both sides” to peace ignore the vulnerability experienced by people of color and as a result amplify white colonizer<sup>1</sup> hetero<sup>2</sup> cis<sup>3</sup> Christian privilege.

Therefore, CCA also names the terrorism in Virginia for what it is: a blatant demonstration of white supremacy, an attitude and ideology which runs rampant throughout Appalachia in both overt and covert ways. Our region is targeted for support of this malicious ideology because of an historical tolerance for it, so we are grateful to church leaders who boldly break this tradition from the pulpit. We must acknowledge that our nation continues to be gripped by racism in part because, for too long, white Christian leaders have been weak, vague or altogether silent in publicly decrying both the outright belief in white superiority and the more subtle ways that the lives of people of color are disregarded as inferior. When religious leaders fail to preach Jesus’ undeniable teachings of inclusion, equality and solidarity, and then support or hold company with other elites who arguably hold white supremacist views, the result is a contradictory message for the faithful. The people of God are left questioning the stance and depth of sincerity of the clergy on these issues, or worse, are given ample reason to distort the gospel and rationalize discriminating and violent behavior.

When the church neglects or refuses to rebuke white supremacy explicitly, we enact and exemplify it. Therefore, CCA continues to call on all white Christians, particularly white Catholics, especially our white priests and bishops, to condemn prophetically and unambiguously all forms and degrees of white supremacy, both the dramatic actions of newly emboldened racist organizations and the daily disregard for the suffering and oppression of our brothers and sisters who are people of color. We re-commit ourselves to doing the same and increasing our efforts to discern and address how white supremacy takes particular form in Appalachia.

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<sup>1</sup> colonizer - Sent by one civilization to another land for the purposing of “civilizing” the people already there, under the assumption that the existing people are not civilized.

<sup>2</sup> hetero – Short for heterosexual.

<sup>3</sup> cis - Short for “cisgender,” used to describe someone whose gender identity matches their anatomical gender at birth. Opposite of “transgender.”