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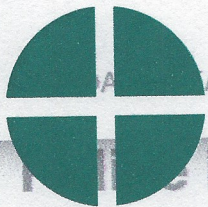
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UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

Accountability

JUNE 24, 2020

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WASHINGTON – In the wake of the recent deaths of African Americans in police custody and the national discussion on police reform and racial justice, Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, chairman of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development; Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville, auxiliary bishop of Washington, chairman of the Committee on Migration; and Bishop Shelton J. Fabre

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Committee Against Racism, have sent a letter to all members of the U.S. Congress to offer reflections and principles for police accountability and reform.

In their letter, the bishops note that, although law enforcement officers offer “a great and needed service,” the “terrible and unjust killing of George Floyd, Rayshard Brooks, and so many more,” demonstrates that there must be “better practices for formation and accountability for police, certainly in the use of lethal force, but also in patterns of discrimination and prejudice, so that real accountability can happen before more lives are lost.” The bishops make reference to their pastoral letters on criminal justice and racism over the years, commentary from Pope Francis on the death of George Floyd as well as a previous address on the use of force by police, and remarks on the role of police in society from Pope Benedict XVI and Pope St. John Paul II.

The bishops write, “We stand in the long tradition—from St. Augustine, to St. Thomas Aquinas, to Dr. Martin Luther King—that claims that the purpose of law

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and law enforcement is the promotion of justice.” The “only solution to the challenges of this moment,” is to follow the wise counsel of Pope St. Paul VI: “If you want peace, work for justice.”

The full text of the letter to the Senate may be found online [here](#) . An identical letter was addressed to the House of Representatives.

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