The Director for the Ministry of Black Catholics for the Diocese of Wilmington is Fr. Paul M. Williams, OFM. The response to growing concerns about use of deadly force by law enforcement in our Diocese has primarily taken the form of ecumenical prayer services. In response to Archbishop Kurtz request for support of a National Day of Peace, Bishop Francis J. Malooly held an Ecumenical Prayer Service for Peace on 9/9/2016 in the Cathedral of St. Peter in downtown Wilmington. Another ecumenical prayer service for peace was held on Jan 17, 2017 at St. Catherine of Sienna Church in one of the downtown deaneries. The service was organized by the Pastor, Fr. John L. Hynes. Over 25 faith communities participated with over 300 attendees and the keynote speaker was a pastor and leader of the Interdenominational Ministers Action Council (IMAC) of Delaware.

Issues of racism and social justice are regularly discussed at the Ministry for Black Catholics (MBC) monthly meetings. Various Board members act as facilitators for Racism and Social Justice, African Catholic Affairs, Kwanzaa, NBCC Coordination, Liturgy and Wilmington Diocesan Gospel Choir, Youth, Health, and Pro-Life Activities. One of our members was recently appointed to the African American Task Force for St. Vincent de Paul Society’s Multicultural and Diversity Committee.

The annual MBC calendar includes events aimed at evangelization and promoting inter-racial harmony, such as the Annual St. Martin de Porres Celebration which is a Diocesan mass celebrated by Bishop Malooly. Our first Diocesan wide Black Catholic Youth Conference was held on 9/24/2016. Turn-out was low, but workshops presented on Pro-Life issues and Black History were powerful. The program was conducted by Oracle Ministries from Washington, D.C., led by Sr. Oralisa Martin (D. Min.) along with Msgr. Ray East, a Pastor from Archdiocese of Washington, D.C.

At St. Joseph Church, the only predominantly Black Catholic parish in the Diocese, an Annual Ecumenical Prayer Breakfast is held at the end of January. This year’s guest speaker was a Pastor from Philadelphia who spoke on “Do Black Lives Matter in Black Churches?”

Ecumenical study groups were formed in 2015 in Wilmington to study a new book on racism entitled *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the age of Color-blindness* by Michelle Alexander and its impact on Community Policing. One of our Board members is actively involved in this program and is exploring possible support for the Movement for a Culture of Peace, which is a program sponsored by Delaware Pacem in Terris which has organized an annual March for
Peace and other events focused on promoting peace in our community. Ongoing monthly forums are held to raise awareness, educate, and foster collaboration within the community. It is currently exploring the Carbondale, Illinois model for the International Movement for Non-Violent Cities.

The Diocese of Wilmington is also home to the Knights and Ladies Auxiliary of St. Peter Claver Council and Court #383. The Knights and Ladies sponsor a joint scholarship program each year for high school and college students. The Ladies Auxiliary also supports Urban Promise Street Ministry which provides after school care for disadvantaged youth. The Ladies Auxiliary also provides school bags, Christmas gifts and other material support to the needy through the local St. Vincent de Paul Society.

I would also like to comment on the Pro-Life Activities. Abortion is the leading cause of death in the African American community, yet no one is raising the alarm, especially African American Ministers, Catholic or otherwise. The silence on abortion in the African American community is deafening, especially here in Wilmington.

The Black Lives Matter Movement is a cry for help which I believe is linked to abortion and the blatant disregard for the sanctity of life. My wife and I have been pro-life advocates for over 25 years and we hardly see any participation by African Americans in the sidewalk prayer vigils at the Planned Parenthood (PP) Abortion Clinic. It is difficult to get people to participate because too many men and women regard the issue as a freedom or right as Bishop Braxton wrote in his 2/26/16 article entitled: The Racial Divide in the U.S. Revisited: The Catholic Church and the Black Lives Matter Movement.

My wife and I were foster parents for 15 years and mainly cared for babies. We adopted our first foster child who is now 18 years old. We understand that being pro-life also entails support for single parents, education, adoption, reducing poverty and other dimensions, but African Americans are killing our own at an alarming rate.

Too many people have forgotten the historical roots of Planned Parenthood whose founder, Margaret Sanger, advocated extermination of the black race. In my opinion the mission and strategy of PP is still the same today as when it was founded. PP is the largest single provider of abortion in the African American community.

Black genocide is no longer a myth. The 2012 census counted roughly 39 million African Americans in the U.S. If you count the 14+ million black children aborted since 1973, the 2012 census represents a 25% reduction in population. The statistics are alarming and I believe there is a strong correlation between abortion, low esteem, and black crime. If we don’t value life in the womb, how can we value the poor, the disabled, the incarcerated, or the mentally ill?
Abortion also takes a terrible toll on the African American family and on relationships between husbands and wives. Based on the abortion figures, there are thousands of women who are in need of healing from the trauma of abortion. Ministries such as Rachel’s Vineyard could be very helpful if better known in the African American community.

I believe we need to do more to eliminate abortion as African Americans, but we need leaders who are willing to stand up for the unborn and speak out about the injustice, the holocaust in our midst so that more people will be convinced of the truth about abortion, i.e., that all life is sacred and we do not have the right to kill an innocent child.

At the same time, politicians and Pro-Life advocates should be supportive of poor women and families who choose life by advocating for both governmental and community support so that the child is not raised in poverty, but will have a fair chance in life. We, as Pro-Life people, must do more than oppose abortion; we must be supportive throughout the stages of life from conception to natural death.

This basically summarizes our involvement and activities aimed at addressing concerns of violence and racial injustice in the community.

Prepared by Deacon Bob Cousar on 3/2/2017
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