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**STATEMENT OF MOST REVEREND NELSON J. PÉREZ
ON THE OCCASION OF REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY
AND THE FORMATION OF THE COMMISSION ON RACIAL HEALING**

Today, we join with others across the nation in commemorating the life and ministry of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This year, perhaps more than ever before, all of us need to deeply reflect on his message of peacefully yet persistently seeking racial equality and justice for all. My sincere hope is that it will lead us to imitate his example through actions of love.

Despite many promising strides over the years, the events that unfolded across the country in 2020 are a stark reminder that the evil sin of racism still infects people's hearts. As a man who preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Dr. King believed that racism could be defeated by active love and the light of faith.

He understood and shared with us that pure love in the imitation of God, the Father, is the most powerful force in the world. That force lives deep in each of us. God planted the seed of love in our hearts at conception. It is a gift that transcends skin color and all other traits that make us different. God's love is what unites us as a human family. When we share it freely, we will overcome the darkness of sin.

I firmly believe that we can best honor the work and legacy of Doctor King through action. So, I am pleased to announce that I decided to form a Commission on Racial Healing in our Archdiocese.

This new initiative is primarily a response to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and his commandment for us to love one another. It is also a direct response to the racial divide in our nation, which has sadly widened over the past several months. This Commission harkens to one formed by my predecessor, John Cardinal Krol, during the turbulence of the 1960s and builds on the Church's tradition as an agent of respect for human dignity.

The Commission will bring together a diverse group containing Catholics from city and suburban parishes who are Black and White, Asian, and Latino. They represent the many faces of our Archdiocesan family. They will encounter each other as sisters and brothers with respect and love. Through this encounter all of us will be led to action as we seek to live out the Gospel and eradicate the sin of racism.

In his most recent encyclical letter, *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis writes, “How wonderful would it be, even as we discover faraway planets, to rediscover the needs of the brother and sisters who orbit around us” (FT, 31). This is the challenge of Pope Francis, the challenge of Martin Luther King and most importantly, the mandate of Jesus Christ.

I ask that you pray with me that work of this Commission will bear much fruit. Let us do what Martin Luther King challenged us to do, build a beloved community as we move forward with the gift of hope. On this day and every day, let us hear Dr. King’s voice. Let us share in his dream. With God’s grace, let us make it a reality.

+*Most Reverend Nelson J. Pérez*
Archbishop of Philadelphia

Editor’s Note: Archbishop Pérez has appointed the following individuals to serve on the Commission on Racial Healing.

- Mr. James Andrews, Saint Martin de Porres Parish (North Philadelphia)
- Ms. Rebecca Cherico, Saint Helena Parish (Blue Bell)
- Ms. Velma Clark, Our Lady of Charity Parish (Brookhaven)
- Honorable Lucretia Clemons, Saint Raymond of Peñafort Parish (Philadelphia)
- Reverend Keith Chylinski, Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary (Wynnewood)
- Mr. Gerry Davis, Saint Isaac Jogues Parish (Wayne)
- Sister Jocelyn Edathil, SIC, Saint Jude Syro-Malankara Catholic Church (Philadelphia)
- Ms. Udochi Ekwerike, Saint Cyprian Parish (Philadelphia)
- Mr. Jose Figueroa, Saint Martin of Tours Parish (Philadelphia)
- Ms. Alana Lee, Saint Thomas Aquinas Parish (Philadelphia)
- Ms. Angela Lewis, Saint Eleanor Parish (Collegeville)
- Ms. Grace Maguire, Saint Katharine of Siena Parish (Wayne)
- Ms. Marcelle McGuirk, Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul Parish (Philadelphia)
- Mr. Patrick McKenzie, Saint Paul Parish (Philadelphia)
- Mr. Lorenzo Umstead, Saint Ignatius of Loyola Parish (Philadelphia)