



Toronto, June 3, 2020

Our Beloved Coptic Community in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA),

Peace to you and grace.

The recent event of George Floyd's death in the USA mandates a statement. We wish to add our voices to those standing up to all forms of oppression, discrimination, and racism. We recognize that such prejudice and thought patterns are deep-rooted and insidious. We affirm that all human beings regardless of their race, creed, ethnicity or skin colour are equally created in the image and likeness of God and are deserving of respect and human dignity. It is our belief that, as indicated in the Book of Revelation, heaven is prepared for people **"from every nation, tribe, people and language."** (Revelation 7:9) Thus, each person is equal in Christ's love since God has **"loved the world."** (John 3:16) Moreover, all discrimination and oppression are categorically anti-Christian, as Christ Himself purposed His mission on earth **"to set at liberty those who are oppressed."** (Luke 4:18)

Yes, "Black Lives Matter!" The Copts, who have experienced systematic persecution in the past, stand by all those who are persecuted, and particularly in these days the members of the Black community. As Coptic Orthodox clergy in the GTA representing the first Church in Africa since the first century AD, we now share our faith in all corners of the earth with all nations without partiality, following the biblical teaching contained in the realization of the apostle Saint Peter: **"In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation, whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him."** (Acts 10:34-35) We therefore will do our best to eliminate any signs of prejudice and racism in our midst, and to educate our congregations about love, acceptance, and inclusion. We stand by the Black community because they are an integral part of the body of Christ, the Church. We stand by the Black community because we believe in them, we believe in a better world, and we believe in God, who can make it happen with our synergistic cooperation. We stand by the Black community because we are united against any form of hatred and oppression as God Himself commands us to: **"Act justly and love mercy."** (Micah 6:8)

We collectively pray for a world that advocates peace, equality, and human dignity for everyone impartially. May God's Spirit bring healing to the world during these turbulent times.