



February 1, 2023

Dear Friends,

As we begin Black History Month, I am mindful now, and throughout the year, of the countless opportunities for learning, reflection and action. As many have said, African-American and Black history is American history. The historic and ongoing resistance to racial injustice that Black people have undertaken has made the United States more just, more equal, and more democratic in ways that have changed our country forever for the better. Achievements by Black people across all fields and sectors have transformed our society and the world. All this struggle and persistence are cause for inspiration, while also pointing to the work still to be done.

Just this weekend, raw footage from Memphis once again disrupted any sense of complacency with the horrific killing of an unarmed Black man, Tyre Nichols, a father, son, photographer, skateboarder and friend. Problems of police brutality, mass incarceration and systemic racism remain urgent matters for our steadfast attention.

I am heartened that students, faculty, staff and community partners are taking up the call this month to bring to the forefront issues of concern and to celebrate the many facets of Black history.

Throughout [Black History Month](#), you can find a variety of films, art exhibit programs, talks, table-sits and more activities and events to attend. I encourage you to take advantage of these with open hearts and minds.

Furthermore, over the last two-plus years, the University has taken significant steps to prioritize and advance the pursuit of inclusivity, including the creation of a [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan](#). The Plan, launched in April 2022, was developed through engagement with stakeholders who contributed their expertise and experience to the process. It represents a roadmap to advance inclusive excellence by leveraging existing successful initiatives and embracing new, innovative ideas. This plan can only become a success if we remain united in action. We must continue to act intentionally as a university community to achieve these goals. This plan must not sit on a shelf; it must continue to live in alignment with the University's Mission and the Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus. Our accomplishments will assist the University in being accessible to all.

Today, we are excited to announce the launch of the [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan – Progress webpage](#), where the University community can learn about our ongoing efforts toward reaching the goals of this important initiative. Our transparency paired with public accountability is key to building a thriving community.

I am motivated by the prayerful words of Thea Bowman, FSPA, a Black Catholic religious sister, who said, “God’s glory is revealed because we love one another across the barriers of race, culture and class.” May her wisdom and example animate our engagement and dialogue this month and beyond.

Yours faithfully,

Joseph G. Marina, S.J.  
President