



June 17, 2021

Dear Friends,

Juneteenth is the oldest known celebration of the end of slavery in the United States. It commemorates the day that enslaved African Americans in Texas learned of their freedom two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation.

While this liberation happened over 156 years ago, Black Americans continue to feel the effects of systemic racism through criminal laws that disparately impact them, unequal access to education and health care, and attempts to silence their voices and those of their allies.

Over the last year, and especially following the murder of George Floyd, the University has intensified its commitment to equality and opportunity for all. Efforts to date include approving and sharing an updated Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy, increasing training, education and development programs about diversity and inclusion, and deepening our commitment to diversify our faculty and staff, including the creation of four new faculty positions. In the coming year, I look forward to even more progress, especially the completion of a Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan.

Our work to address institutional racism at the University and in the community must continue. Let us use the celebration of Juneteenth to reflect on our collective challenge to continue building a campus committed to equity and equality that welcomes everyone. As a resource, the Weinberg Memorial Library has [developed a list](#) of readings, podcasts, media and other materials related to racism that I encourage you to explore in your reflection.

These are just small steps on a long road but we are moving in the right direction. And, with the help of grace, we will continue to approach the vision of a society rooted in peace and fully committed to justice. Thank you for all you have done already to help advance this essential part of our Catholic and Jesuit identity. I look forward to walking with you in the journey ahead.

Yours faithfully,

Joseph G. Marina, S.J.  
President