

## *The Siren Cry*

The other night I was abruptly pulled from sleep by the wail of a Police siren speeding past my house. I began to call out to God for wisdom, peace, clarity, and discernment for the officers involved; something I've done for most of my adult life. There are other prayers I have prayed in recent weeks; prayers of gratitude for the quality men and women who watch over Niles as our City, County, and State Police, regardless of their color.

The heinous killing of George Floyd by former police officer/now prisoner Derek Chauvin, brings a painful reminder that there are those few who through their betrayal of their vow to protect and serve, tear at the very heart of America's civil soul.

This heartbreaking and senseless killing makes me all the more grateful for the openness of Niles City Police Chief Jim Millin and City Manager Ric Huff, who met with citizens via a "Zoom" meeting on June 4<sup>th</sup>, followed by another the next week, this time face to face with area clergy in the basement of Mt. Calvary Baptist Church. I was grateful on both those occasions to find that the same police who swiftly and successfully dealt with a violent, knife wielding soul who attacked Amtrak passengers a few years ago at our depot, and have also dealt with hundreds of other documented cases, were found guiltless of violating their sacred oath to the citizens of Niles. It was also enlightening to discover that the statistics shared in those meetings revealed that our Niles peace officers receive approximately \$30,000 worth of annual training, and in 2019 received 14,000 calls of service, and were compelled to use "force of restraint" in only 26 cases, 0.2% of the total (16 of which were with white men and women, 9 with black men and women, and with 1 hispanic man); a tragic occurrence regardless of their color.

As we watch major American cities being burned and looted by raging mobs, I want to express my thanks one last time, to those civil servants who serve the families of Niles with such continuing fidelity. Derek Chauvin, disgraced former police officer and current inmate under a murder indictment, betrayed his office and the sacred nature of his calling. But we must never allow the crimes of those few to be imported and projected upon the dedicated men and women who have not betrayed their callings here.

So, the next time you are awakened in the night by a siren (police, fire, or EMT), please pray! Pray for every precious soul on the other end of that siren's cry, because they all need God's mercy and grace, both cop and criminal; regardless of their color.