

Press Release
For Immediate Distribution
December 7, 2017

Joint Statement of Bishops Kopacz, Seage and Swanson

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are honored to join with the good people of our state in the celebration of Mississippi's Bicentennial, 200 years of statehood. This milestone has already been celebrated in numerous ways across the State, and these celebrations will culminate with the opening of the Museum of Mississippi History and the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum on December 10, 2017. We have no doubt that these two museums will illuminate the history, culture, and numerous achievements of our State, and its people, and will help people everywhere comprehend and put into proper context our past and present, as well as help us better understand the challenges we face in the future.

Born from the racial and other tensions of the 1950's and 60's, at various times our predecessors in office spoke with conviction and in one united voice against the variety of forces undermining society and the common good, including violence, racism, bigotry and racial injustice. Once again, we come together to make our voices heard on a subject of weighty importance to our State.

The Mississippi Civil Rights Museum is the first, publicly funded museum of its type in the country. It will serve as a significant acknowledgement and affirmation by our state not only of its accomplishments but of its sometimes bloody and shameful past. Our hope, indeed our common prayer, is that the Museum will help us move toward individual and collective reconciliation for the hurts, injustices, prejudices, failures, violence and omissions of the past and empower coming generations of Mississippians to do justice and love mercy.

All of us – from the poorest of the poor to those who stride in the corridors of power in Jackson and Washington – must do all in our power to respect the dignity of every human being and constantly strive for justice and peace. Without overlooking President Trump's provocative statements surrounding racial strife in our nation, our fervent hope is that the President will use his attendance at the opening of the Museums and the Bicentennial Celebration to acknowledge the sacrifice and witness of countless individuals who offered themselves, their souls and bodies, to eliminate injustice and oppression in our State.

Our State's Bicentennial is a cause for celebration. May it also be an occasion for us to launch new and meaningful efforts of reconciliation and healing.

Bishop Joseph R. Kopacz
11th Bishop of the Catholic
Diocese of Jackson

Bishop Brian R. Seage
10th Bishop of the Episcopal
Diocese of Mississippi

Bishop James E. Swanson, Sr.
MS Conference of The United
Methodist Church

###