

September 22, 2016

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Charlotte

Keith Lamar Scott died on Tuesday, September 20th. A woman, identified as Mr. Scott's sister, protested her brother's death at the hands of the CMPD. "He didn't have no gun, he wasn't messing with nobody ... them jumped out boys, them undercover detectives, they jumped out their truck. They said 'Hands up! He got a gun, he got a gun.'" The family said he had a book. The officers at the scene said he had a gun.

Last night the whole world was watching what was happening in Charlotte as a demonstration turned violent. Ground zero was on Trade Street in front of the Omni Hotel where a civilian was shot in the head by another civilian as the demonstration turned into a riot.

I was at CMC today to visit the sick. The hospital was unusually busy. All the chaplain parking lots were filled. It was a long wait for the elevators in the lobby. What I noticed most of all was how pensive everyone was. Their faces expressed a thoughtfulness mixed with sadness as they weighed the events of the last few days in their minds.

We weren't the only ones lost in thought. What we witnessed was new for us in Charlotte. Even at the news conference this morning, a man who spoke after the mayor and police chief told us that he had never seen anything like this in his forty-one years of public service.

I wonder what many of you are thinking about. Charlotte is a city of the new South where the future has great promise – for all of us. We might have spent too much time building our city that we did not notice that others were left behind. Happiness cannot be purchased. What makes us happy is the well-being of our families and the joy we have in them.

Amos, the prophet of Old Testament times, was called to deliver God's message to the people of Israel. It was a time of economic prosperity which only served to mask the moral decay of the nation. Amos said of the people, "They do not know how to do what is right" (Amos 3: 10).

America's social fabric is also frayed. How can we expect God's blessings if we continue down the same road. God can heal our country, but we have to turn back to God with all our heart. If we as a nation cannot do that, then each of us individually and as a family must rededicate our lives to God and renounce all sinful deeds (see Joshua 24: 15).

Alveta King, who is the niece of the famous civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said that anger is a matter of the heart, not skin color. We can actually be brothers and sisters if we work on it. "On that day I will raise up the fallen hut of David ... I will restore my people Israel" (Amos 9: 11, 14).