

## Deacon Mike's Monday Musings: March 17, 2025

On this date in history, March 17, 1886, 23 Black people were killed when a white mob stormed the courthouse in Carroll County, Mississippi, and opened fire. Black residents were in court following accusations against a white man for the assault of two brothers, Ed and Charley Brown. The brothers, who were Black, had accused local attorney James Monroe Liddell, who was white, of assaulting them during an altercation.

That Black residents would use the legal system to try to hold a white person accountable for a crime infuriated white residents of the county. On the day of the trial, a group of 50 to 100 white men rode into town and ran into the courthouse, opening fire and killing only Black residents in attendance. None of the white people in attendance were hit by bullets. Though the killings sparked outrage nationwide, no action was taken by the county or the state of Mississippi. No one was ever tried for the murders.

Almost 140 years later, we continue to see that human rights are not equal for all people across society, even though there is overwhelming evidence that respect for those rights is the preliminary condition for a country's social and economic development.

A key theme of Catholic Social Teaching states, and sociological studies support, that human dignity can be protected- and a healthy community can be achieved- *only if human rights are protected and human responsibilities are met*. <https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/seven-themes-of-catholic-social-teaching>

Every human person, regardless of genetic makeup, socio-economic status or legality of residency, has a God-given, inherent and fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. These unconditional rights include: food, clothing, shelter, medical care, rest, and essential social services. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities to protect and work to promote the common good of humanity—to seek first the betterment of the whole of society, especially those who are marginalized and vulnerable.

At Catholic Charities, we operate every day- and at all times- with the understanding that our main purpose is to identify, understand, and to protect the rights of every client who comes to us. If we have resources or services that would assist the client we offer them and help the client in utilizing them. If we do not have the resources and services the client needs, we do not simply turn them away. We acknowledge that we have a responsibility to help them locate a source that can assist them.

Human rights and responsibilities form a plank upon which our agency is built. As “Pilgrims of Hope”, our sincere hope is that one day human rights and responsibilities will be a plank upon which all of society is built.

Blessings,

Deacon Mike