



ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. LOUIS

Peace & Justice Commission

Cardinal Rigali Center

20 Archbishop May Drive

St. Louis, Missouri 63119

Statement in Honor of Sister Mary Antona Ebo

It is with great sadness that the Peace & Justice Commission of the Archdiocese mourns the passing of Sr Mary Antona Ebo, FSM. Sister Ebo's courage and work to end the injustice of racism provided the inspiration and guidance to the Commission as we began our task of responding to systemic injustice by building a more just community that strengthens the family and promotes human dignity for the common good. Below is a tribute written by Commissioner Jason Purnell for our celebration of her life last year.

*Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?"
"Here I am, "I said; "send me!" (Isaiah 6:8)*

It is with great joy that the members of the Peace & Justice Commission gather with all of the faithful in the Archdiocese of St. Louis to give thanks to God for the life and work of Sister Mary Antona Ebo. Through her ministry to the people of God in the field of health care, her courageous witness as an African American Catholic woman in the struggle for equality and justice at a pivotal moment in the Civil Rights Movement, and her faithful leadership and service to her congregation, the Archdiocese, and the Catholic Church, Sister Ebo stands as a shining example of the all-encompassing love of Jesus Christ.

When asked why she joined the historic march in Selma, Alabama, on March 10, 1965, following the infamous "Bloody Sunday" confrontation at the Edmund Pettus Bridge, Sister Ebo remarked, "I'm here because I'm a Negro, a nun, a Catholic, and because I want to bear witness." She said that it was a privilege to be in Alabama and that she was there to ensure that all African Americans had the right to vote. She stood at the front of the march that day and has continued to stand for equal opportunity in the decades that followed.

She would become a pioneer, not just in the realm of civil rights, but also as the first African American woman religious to lead a hospital in the United States when she assumed the role of executive director of St. Clare Hospital in Baraboo, Wisconsin, in 1967. Her distinguished career in health care spanned more than thirty years. She has received numerous awards, honorary degrees, and other recognitions of her considerable achievements.

As a new generation confronts the ongoing challenge of racial injustice, both locally and nationally, with renewed calls for reform on issues ranging from the relationship of communities of color with law enforcement to securing access to voting rights and addressing lingering disparities in health and other life outcomes, Sister Mary Antona Ebo's brave and forthright example of enduring regard for "the least of these" whom Jesus called upon us to care for above all gives us strength to continue to build the kingdom of God for all of His children. It is our hope that the work of the Peace & Justice Commission will reflect the same courageous response to the Lord's call for radical love, justice, and service.