*As representatives of the outgoing 2019-20 School Council for Our Lady of Fatima, we felt it was important to speak with you on recent events. The last six months have been challenging for all of us due to the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic including the economic toll it has taken and social unrest experienced by many OLF families.*

*Deciding whether to have our children return to in-class instruction or remote learning for the 2020-21 school year were not easy decisions for many families. That said, we would also like to acknowledge and convey our appreciation for the hard work of the OLF administration, teachers and staff in preparing for the start of the school year.*

*This pandemic has also shone a light on the pre-existing inequities in our society further underscored by the tragic death of George Floyd earlier this year and so many others before and after Mr. Floyd’s passing even in the GTA.*

*We are blessed to live in Canada, where we take pride in accepting all cultures, religions and races.  However, it is important that we also acknowledge that even multicultural nations need to stay vigilant in the fight against anti-black racism and broader systemic discrimination.  As parents ourselves as well as representing the OLF community on the 2019-20 parent council, we understand that racism exists and acknowledge that remaining silent is not an option when so many of us, our family members, friends and neighbours are suffering from the real effects of racism and systemic inequities.*

*We also acknowledge the messages sent out over the summer by the Halton Catholic District School Board as well as Principal Varano speaking to these issues. While it is not yet known who will be on the 2020-21 OLF parent council, as representatives of the outgoing council we believe there will be opportunities in this new school year for council to partner with school staff, administration and our community to lean into this issue together.  We have an opportunity to make a difference in our community and teach our children about anti-black racism and systemic discrimination in ways that promote respect, love, empathy and understanding. If you have suggestions on anti-racism activities for the school administration or the new parent council to consider please contact Mrs. Varano at* *varanov@hcdsb.org* *and she will share the ideas with the new council.*

*We understand that OLF has not waited to begin this work and that part of the professional development of all staff at the beginning of the school year included many new health related protocols, but also included sensitivity training and awareness and identification of unconscious bias. We applaud these efforts by OLF.*

*In conclusion, we are sharing the prayer of Pope Francis that concluded His Holiness’ June 3, 2020 statement on the death of George Floyd and the sin of racism.*

*“Let us pray for the consolation of their grieving families and friends and let us implore the national reconciliation and peace for which we yearn. May Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of America, intercede for all those who work for peace and justice in your land and throughout the world.”*

*Thank you and God bless you all.*

*OLF School Council 2019-2020*