Resources for Respect Life Month ~ October 2019

for

Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love

a pastoral letter against racism

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

October is Respect Life Month in the U.S. Catholic community.

Please consider planning opportunities during October 2019 for your parish or school or campus community to learn and reflect on the pastoral of our U.S. Catholic Bishops, Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call To Love.

The attached ideas and resources (from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and other sources) were assembled by the Diocese of Rochester Public Policy Committee/Catholic Charities.

We invite you to contact the Justice and Peace/Parish Social Ministry staff person at the Catholic Charities office serving your county for help planning and using these resources. A contact list is included in this packet. Thank you!
Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love

a pastoral letter against racism

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

The injustice and harm racism causes are an attack on human life. The Church in the United States has spoken out consistently and forcefully against abortion, assisted suicide, euthanasia, the death penalty, and other forms of violence that threaten human life. It is not a secret that these attacks on human life have severely affected people of color, who are disproportionately affected by poverty, targeted for abortion, have less access to healthcare, have the greatest numbers on death row, and are most likely to feel pressure to end their lives when facing serious illness. As bishops, we unequivocally state that racism is a life issue. Accordingly, we will not cease to speak forcefully against and work toward ending racism. Racism directly places brother and sister against each other, violating the dignity inherent in each person. The Apostle James commands the Christian: “show no partiality as you adhere to the faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ” (Jas 2:1).

- Prayers of the Faithful and Prayer to Address the Sin of Racism
- Weekly Bulletin Education – four weeks
- Insert the USCCB resource, A Call to Address Racism in Our Hearts and Communities or the back grounder, What Is Systemic Racism, in the bulletin for parishioners to take home
- Offer an Adult Book Study/Discussion or Film Series
- See the list of age-appropriate study guides developed by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops
- Ask your pastor/homilists to reflect on the pastoral during a homily on Respect Life Sunday or other weekend during the month of October
- Contact the Justice & Peace/Parish Social Ministry coordinator at your local Catholic Charities office for help
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PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL AGAINST RACISM

For our Church, that we may celebrate and welcome the diverse faces of Christ in our community, our worship, our ministries, and our leaders, let us pray to the Lord.

For world leaders, that they may work to end the violence perpetrated by verbal attacks, deadly weapons, and cold indifference. May our nation and countries around the world become havens of peace, let us pray to the Lord.

For our community, that we may receive the grace to see every human being as a child of God, regardless of race, language, or culture, let us pray to the Lord.

For parents and educators, that we may teach our children how to resolve differences non-violently and respectfully and have the courage to model it in our own behavior, let us pray to the Lord.

For this faith community, that we may hear the call of our leaders in the new Pastoral Letter against Racism to respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit to act together to end violence and racism, let us pray to the Lord.

For our public officials, that the Spirit of Wisdom may help them strive to work for equal education, suitable housing, and equal employment opportunities for all, let us pray to the Lord.

For solidarity in our global human family, that we may be vigilant in our protection of those who are most vulnerable and most in need, let us pray to the Lord.

For those who have died, especially those who have died in the pursuit of justice, may they be welcomed into the great glory of God’s love, let us pray to the Lord.

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PRAYER TO ADDRESS THE SIN OF RACISM
We pray for healing to address
The persistent sin of racism
Which rejects the full humanity
Of some of your children,
And the talents and potential You have given.

We pray for the grace to recognize
The systems that do not support
The dignity of every person,
That do not promote respect
For those who are seen as other,
Who bear the legacy of centuries
Of discrimination, fear, and violence.

We pray for graced structures
So children of color in Flint, and all children,
Have access to clean water and health care.

We pray for graced structures
So children of color in Mississippi, and all children,
Have quality education that will allow them to develop their gifts.

We pray for graced structures
So children of color in Camden, and all children,
Have homes where families can live in dignity and security.

We pray for graced structures
So children of color in Chicago, and all children,
Can grow up without fear, without the sound of gunshots.
Lord of all, we ask you to hear and answer our prayers.
Give us eyes to see how the past
Has shaped the complex present,
And to perceive how we must create
A new way forward,
With a new sense of community
That embraces and celebrates
The rich diversity of all,
That helps us live out your call to reject
The sin of racism, the stain of hate,
And to seek a compassionate solidarity
Supported by Your grace and Your love. We ask this through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

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“The injustice and harm racism causes are an attack on human life. The Church in the United States has spoken out consistently and forcefully against abortion, assisted suicide, euthanasia, the death penalty, and other forms of violence that threaten human life. It is not a secret that these attacks on human life have severely affected people of color, who are disproportionately affected by poverty, targeted for abortion, have less access to healthcare, have the greatest numbers on death row, and are most likely to feel pressure to end their lives when facing serious illness. As bishops, we unequivocally state that racism is a life issue.”
Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call To Love, pastoral against racism – US Catholic Bishops

“Racism comes in many forms. It can be seen in deliberate, sinful acts. In recent times, we have seen bold expressions of racism by some groups as well as individuals. The re-appearance of symbols of hatred, such as nooses and swastikas in public spaces, is a tragic indicator of rising racial and ethnic animus. All too often, Hispanic and African Americans face discrimination in hiring, housing, educational opportunities, and incarceration. Racial profiling frequently targets Hispanics for selective immigration enforcement practices, and African Americans for suspected criminal activity. There is also growing fear and harassment of persons from majority Muslim countries. Extreme nationalist ideologies are feeding the American public discourse with xenophobic rhetoric that instigates fear against foreigners, immigrants, and refugees. Finally, too often racism comes in the form of the sin of omission, when individuals, communities, and even churches remain silent and fail to act against racial injustice when it is encountered.”
Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call To Love, pastoral against racism – US Catholic Bishops
OCTOBER 20

Respect Life Month – October 2019
OPEN WIDE OUR HEARTS: THE ENDURING CALL TO LOVE

“Racism occurs because a person ignores the fundamental truth that, because all humans share a common origin, they are all brothers and sisters, all equally made in the image of God. When this truth is ignored, the consequence is prejudice and fear of the other, and — all too often — hatred. Every racist act — every such comment — every joke, every disparaging look as a reaction to the color of skin, ethnicity, or place of origin — is a failure to acknowledge another person as a brother or sister, created in the image of God. In these and in many other such acts, the sin of racism persists in our lives, in our country, and in our world.”
Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call To Love, pastoral against racism — US Catholic Bishops

OCTOBER 27

Respect Life Month – October 2019
OPEN WIDE OUR HEARTS: THE ENDURING CALL TO LOVE

“Racism can often be found in our hearts — in many cases placed there unwillingly or unknowingly by our upbringing and culture. As such, it can lead to thoughts and actions that we do not even see as racist, but nonetheless flow from the same prejudicial root. Consciously or subconsciously, this attitude of superiority can be seen in how certain groups are vilified, called criminals, or are perceived as being unable to contribute to society, even unworthy of its benefits. Racism can also be institutional, when practices or traditions are upheld that treat certain groups of people unjustly. The cumulative effects of personal sins of racism have led to social structure of injustice and violence that makes us all accomplices in racism.”
Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call To Love, pastoral against racism — US Catholic Bishops
open wide our hearts
the enduring call to love a pastoral letter against racism

The Call to Address Racism in Our Hearts and Communities

In their new pastoral letter against racism, *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love*, the Catholic bishops of the United States invite conversion of hearts, minds, and institutions in order to address the evil of racism that still exists in our communities.

By our baptism, we are members of Christ’s body and sharers in his mission. Imitating Christ, we must care for all members of our communities, honoring each person as unique, sacred, and created in the image of God. We know that the evil of racism cuts to the core of God’s plan for humanity, devaluing the diversity God created within the human family. As followers of Christ, we seek to reclaim the God-given sanctity of each person’s inviolable human dignity. The bishops remind us, “The command of love requires us to make room for others in our hearts. It means that we are indeed our brother’s keeper (see Gn 4:9).”

Some among us may want to believe that our country has moved beyond the reality of racism that has so profoundly stained its past, or that racism does not involve us. Almost every day, news headlines demonstrate that our country’s “original sin” of racism continues to impact the lives of many Americans, many of them Catholic—particularly those who belong to the African American, Hispanic/Latino, or Native American communities.

There are signs that racism’s legacies remain prevalent in many systemic inequalities that have deep impact on people of color. The bishops write, “Racism can only end if we contend with the policies and institutional barriers that perpetuate and preserve the inequality—economic and social—that we still see all around us.”

“We read the headlines that report the killing of unarmed African Americans by law enforcement officials. In our prisons, the numbers of inmates of color, notably those who are brown and black, is grossly disproportionate. Despite the great blessings of liberty that this country offers, we must admit the plan truth that for many of our fellow citizens, who have done nothing wrong, interactions with the police are often fraught with fear and even danger.”

– U.S. bishops, *Open Wide Our Hearts*

Within the walls of the Church, many people of color have experienced discrimination and outright racism. Leadership has been lacking. The bishops write, “All too often, leaders of the Church have remained silent about the horrific violence and other racial injustices perpetuated against African Americans and others.” Reflecting on these realities, the bishops implore us to find ways to actively work against the evil of racism. We must seek racial justice within our Church and in our country. Let us all allow the Holy Spirit to convert our hearts to do the work of healing, so we may live authentically in true relationship to one another. Let the fruit of this conversion be evident in our full celebration and integration of ethnic and cultural diversity, which is truly a gift from God.
How Can I Respond?

(1) Listen to and know the stories of our brothers and sisters who have suffered from racism in history, and in the present. True and authentic encounter is difficult but worth the effort. Authentic relationships require vulnerability, humility, and getting outside of your comfort zones. For some, this will mean actively seeking opportunities to engage with people of diverse backgrounds. For others, this might mean raising your voice or sharing your story. Through authentic engagement we bring together diverse perspectives and experiences which honor the fullness of God's plan.

(2) Work to address both individual and systemic racism. Racism can be individual, when persons fail to recognize certain groups as created in the image of God and equal in dignity, or it can be systemic, where practices or policies are upheld that treat certain groups of people unjustly. These systems are often perpetuated due to the silence or unawareness of many. Commit to learning more about racism and employment, housing, wealth, education, criminal justice, and voting—and then get involved in diocesan, parish or community efforts to pray and work for conversion of both hearts and systems.

(3) Think about what you can do, wherever you are. Commit to raising your awareness in whatever situations you find yourself.
   a. As people of faith, we can intentionally work to create spaces of welcome and opportunities for encounter. Create opportunities for sharing of stories and learn how racism impacts our communities. Regularly think about whose voices may be missing as leaders and volunteers in parish ministry. In parishes and schools, educators can use activities from usccb.org/racism to integrate content on the pastoral letter into their lessons.
   b. In your family, think about who you socialize with on a regular basis. Intentionally create opportunities to interact with those you may not run into over the normal course of your week. Where in your community do you see diverse groups of people come together? Parents: talk with your children about race. Continuing to talk with them about everyone's human dignity and the pain of racism in our country will help form them to respect the dignity of all. Find prayers for children at usccb.org/racism.
   c. At school or work, ask: How you can learn more about other cultures? What resources are available to you? If there are others who are treated differently because of their race, speak up. Think about what you might do if you hear someone make disparaging remarks about a classmate or coworker. How can you be ready to respond?

(4) As individuals and communities of faith, examine your conscience. We all must ask ourselves: Where have I not lived as an example of Christ's love? Where have my attitudes or perceptions caused me to devalue persons of other cultures or ethnicities? When have I been unnecessarily suspicious or allowed a preconceived notion to overshadow the human nature of another? When have I seen the "other" instead of welcoming an opportunity to listen to the story of that person's life, struggles, or joys?

For More Information
Read the new pastoral letter, Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love and then talk with others about how your community can respond to the bishops' invitation in the pastoral letter. USCCB resources against racism are at usccb.org/racism.

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What is Systemic Racism?

Today, racism continues to exist in our communities and in our parishes. Racism is what makes us see the "other" with suspicion or to attribute negative characteristics to an entire group of people. This evil manifests itself in our individual thoughts, and also in the workings of our society itself. Today's continuing inequalities in education, housing, employment, wealth, and representation in leadership positions are rooted in our country's shameful history of slavery and systemic racism.

These hard-fought victories deserve to be remembered and celebrated.

Still, these advances are incomplete. Data on social and economic welfare show disparities between many persons of color and their white counterparts.

- Unemployment rates for Africans Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans are considerably higher than the national average. Growing income inequality increasingly affects minorities.
- In the United States, median wealth for white households is ten times greater than for black households, and eight times greater than for Hispanic households.
- Minority homeownership rates lag behind their white counterparts, and yet research shows that minorities face extra hurdles in getting approved for mortgages.
- African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans are disproportionately affected through every stage of the criminal justice system, despite the evidence that different racial and ethnic groups commit crimes at roughly the same rates.

Systemic Racism

Discrimination based on race and ethnicity takes many forms. The United States has made progress in eliminating some of the institutional, legalized racial discrimination of years past such as slavery, Jim Crow laws, “separate but equal” schools, and prohibitions on voting or owning land.
Racism’s Impact in our Communities

America remains a deeply divided place in many ways. Many Americans of all racial and ethnic backgrounds live in neighborhoods that are homogenous. This often limits the opportunity to learn from, interact with, and befriend people who are racially and ethnically different. Yet, having experiences living near those with different experiences and backgrounds can strengthen communities and the Body of Christ.

Many people of color living in low-income areas experience low or no upward economic mobility due to limited access to quality schools, safe neighborhoods, reliable transportation, or higher-paying jobs. Laws and practices in more affluent communities, such as refusing rent assistance vouchers, can prevent low income persons from moving into these communities. As a result, dialogue and encounter with others with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and opinions can be limited or non-existent. In Evangelii Gaudium (no. 59), Pope Francis noted that exclusion and inequality create the climate for discord. Recent violence in communities across the country and the hurtful rhetoric that mark conversations about refugees and migrants indicate that there is still much work to do.

As Christians, we are constantly called to examine our own hearts and consciences for how we might

“Racism can only end if we contend with the policies and institutional barriers that perpetuate and preserve the inequality—economic and social—that we still see all around us. With renewed vigor, we call on members of the Body of Christ to join others in advocating and promoting policies at all levels that will combat racism and its effects in our civic and social institutions.”

— U.S. bishops, Open Wide Our Hearts

contribute to or break down racial divisions, intolerance, and discrimination. The failure to act to end systemic racism hurts those who are victimized and denies all of us the opportunity to benefit from the gifts of diversity.

This handout is excerpted from the Creating on the Margins Contest Packet. Visit usccb.org/youthcontest or usccb.org/concurso-juvenil to learn more about Creating on the Margins, a contest for youth in grades 7-12 that educates youth about poverty in the U.S. and our Catholic response. The 2018-2019 theme is “A Time to Heal Racism.” The contest is sponsored by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development.
OPEN WIDE OUT HEARTS: THE ENDURING CALL TO LOVE
pastoral letter against racism – U.S. Catholic Bishops

Book Discussion Suggestions

- *Waking Up White* - Debby Irving
- *The New Jim Crow* - Michelle Alexander
- *Between the World and Me* - Ta-Nehisi Coates
- *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* - Bryan Stevenson
- *White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* - Robin DiAngelo
- *A Rap on Race* - James Baldwin and Margaret Mead
- *Narrative of His Life* - Frederick Douglas
- *The Souls of Black Folk* - W.E.B. DuBois
- *The Invisible Man* - Ralph Ellison
- *Letter from Birmingham Jail* – The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King
- *Twelve Years A Slave* – Solomon Northrup
- *Jesus and the Disinherited* – Howard Thurman
- *Ishi Means Man* – Thomas Merton (forward by Dorothy Day)

Film/Discussion Suggestion

- *Eyes on the Prize* PBS Documentary
  (Many libraries have copies of the PBS series or check local video rental shops)
- *The Story of Emmett Till*
- *Other Films*  https://socialjusticeresourcecenter.org/cause/racism
OPEN WIDE OUR HEARTS: THE ENDURING CALL TO LOVE

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COMBATTING RACISM - EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

K-8 EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Grade K Activity: We Are All Sacred | en Español
("God's Children of the World" slideshow)

Grade 1 Activity: Fr. Augustus Tolton Story | en Español

Grade 2 Activity: What Makes a Person? | en Español

Grade 3 Activity: How Do We Respect Human Dignity? | en Español

Grade 4 Activity: The Beatitudes Show Us True Happiness | en Español

Grade 5 Activity A: Racism Imperils the Unity of the Body of Christ | en Español

Grade 5 Activity B: Implicit Bias and the Unity of the Body of Christ | en Español

Grade 6 Activity: The Unity of God's Family | en Español

Grade 7 Activity: Social Sin, Racism, and Our Response - The Native American Experience | en Español

Grade 8 Activity: Understanding Individual vs. Institutional Racism | en Español

HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

High School Activity: Fr. Augustus Tolton

High School Activity: Dehumanization in Nazi Germany

High School Activity: Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Legacy

High School Activity: Structures of Sin and Racism

COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Activity for College Campus Communities

Access these resources on-line at U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

OPEN WIDE OUR HEARTS: THE ENDURING CALL TO LOVE

ADULT EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Responding to the Sin of Racism Resources - This packet, which includes bulletin text, handouts, and memes, was compiled by various offices of the USCCB.

Diversity and Racial Justice Resources - The WeAreSaltandLight.org website of the USCCB Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development includes a Diversity and Racial Justice page that features videos and articles on this topic.

Rebuilding the Bridge: 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Movement - The U.S. recently celebrated the 50th anniversaries of several important civil rights milestones. To commemorate these important events and the contributions of many Catholics to the civil rights movement, Cultural Diversity in the Church and African American Affairs, in collaboration with several other organizations, has launched Rebuilding the Bridge: African American Affairs' 50th Anniversary Initiative.


Letter from Birmingham Jail Study Guide - In recognition of the 50th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Letter from Birmingham Jail, Christian Churches Together, one of the largest ecumenical organizations in the U.S., offered a response and created a Study Guide to facilitate reflection either for groups or individuals. The webpage for this important document also has an additional introduction for Catholics to the Study Guide and an introductory letter from Bishop Madden and Bishop Flores.

Intercultural Competencies - This page explains the five competencies that were defined by the U.S. bishops in making "Recognition of Cultural Diversity in the Church" one of their priorities. The manual Building Intercultural Competence for Ministers can be found online or obtained in print from USCCB Publishing. Regional trainings on the competencies are being scheduled at this time. Visit the Intercultural Competency site often for updates. If interested in hosting or organizing a training, please contact Yolanda Taylor-Burwell at ytaylor-burwell@usccb.org or 202-541-3152.

Access these resources on-line at U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

OPEN WIDE OUR HEARTS: THE ENDURING CALL TO LOVE

BACKGROUNDERS

What is Systemic Racism? | en Español (this backgrounder is included with the resource packet)
Racism and Economic Inequality | en Español
Racism and Education | en Español
Racism and Employment | en Español
Racism and Housing | en Español
Racism and the Criminal Justice System | en Español
Racism and the Native American Experience | en Español
Racism and Voting | en Español

Access these resources on-line at U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

CATHOLIC CHARITIES JUSTICE & PEACE/PARISH SOCIAL MINISTRY
STAFF CONTACTS BY COUNTY

- MONROE COUNTY

Marcus Ebenhoe  Catholic Family Center  585-546-7220  mebenhoe@cfcrochester.org

- STEUBEN COUNTY

Tess McKinley  Catholic Charities of Steuben  607-776-8085 x2217
tess.mckinley@dor.org

- TOMPKINS COUNTY

Laurie Konwinski  Catholic Charities of Tompkins/Tioga  607-272-5062 x12
laurie.konwinski@dor.org

- LIVINGSTON COUNTY

Brandy Swain  Catholic Charities of Livingston  585-658-4466

- ONTARIO-WAYNE-YATES-SENeca-CAYUGA COUNTIES

Robert Vona  Catholic Charities of Finger Lakes  315-789-2235 x112
Robert.Vona@dor.org

- CHEMUNG-SCHUYLER-TIOGA COUNTIES

Kathy Dubel  Catholic Charities of Chemung/Schuyler  607-734-9784 x2135
kathy.dubel@dor.org