

Practical Steps for Eradicating Racism: An Invitation

This Guide was prepared to assist bishops and presbyters reflect on the evil and harm of racism. While this is not a comprehensive list, it provides actionable steps that may assist Catholics to reflect and respond in faith. With the aid of Holy Scripture, Catholic social teaching, and sacred tradition, this is an open invitation to journey toward reconciliation.

Racism is evil because it attacks the inherent dignity of the human person, created in the image and likeness of God.

The persistence of racism demands our attention now. Racism emerges in the actions and inactions of individuals; and it is embedded in our institutions and public policies. Our faith calls us both to personal conversion and to transformation of our society.

The following are some actionable steps pastors and their communities may undertake to this end:

1. Read (or re-read) ***Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love – A Pastoral Letter Against Racism*** using the accompanying Study Guide. Visit <http://uscgb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/racism/index.cfm>
2. Create various large and small group opportunities for parishioners to process their feelings in the midst of news and commentary about vulnerable populations and law enforcement. Encourage participants to reflect or share their own upbringing regarding comments in the home, from parents and individuals, media and entertainment, even practices of the Church about the merits or demerits of certain groups of people made to be “the other.” Ask how have I knowingly or unconsciously made this formation part of my world view?
3. Arrange a safe space for young people to reflect and pray about racism and recent events. Listen to the current experiences of young people. Encourage and allow their creative expression. Invite them to generate methodologies that are meaningful to them.
4. Attend an intergenerational interracial virtual town hall discussion on racism. Respect that for some African Americans, Hispanics and others talking about personal racial experiences in a mixed race setting is painful as it is like reopening a wound that hadn’t fully healed.
5. Use a pastoral and non-partisan lens to respond to concerns of parishioners, clergy and staff about racism, policing and public safety. Do not politicize this. Lean on Gospel values, instead.

6. Meet with chaplains and chiefs of police departments to discuss possible actions. Engage the Parish Pastoral and Finance Councils in this discussion.
7. Invite Diocesan Vocational Directors to incorporate regular dialogs among seminarians about their experiences with racism, prejudice and racial discrimination.
8. Create a mechanism for the bishop to hear confidentially from clergy about their personal experiences or understanding of bigotry, privilege, supremacy, bias or indifference to racism. Discuss how these experiences manifest, hinder or complicate their ministries.
9. Invite a conversation with a group of African American, Latino, Indigenous or African men and/or young people about their personal experiences with law enforcement.
10. Encourage homilists to preach against racism and for personal responsibility to eradicate it. Explore how anti-racism looks. Continue to study and understand racism as it manifested in the past and does so today.

This resource was developed by:
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