

PEACE AND JUSTICE



open wide our hearts

the enduring call to love *a pastoral letter against racism*

Article – 2

The following excerpt was taken from: https://www.usccb.org/resources/open-wide-our-hearts_0.pdf

Racism comes in many forms. It can be seen in deliberate, sinful acts. In recent times, we have seen bold expressions of racism by 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, Hispanics and African Americans, for example, 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 the 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.

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 of people 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 structures of injustice and violence that makes us all accomplices in racism.

The Pew Research Center reports, “The racial and ethnic makeup of U.S. prisons continues to look substantially different from the demographics of the country as a whole. In 2016, blacks represented 12% of the U.S. adult population but 33% of the sentenced prison population. Whites accounted for 64% of adults but 30% of prisoners. And while Hispanics represented 16% of the adult population, they accounted for 23% of inmates.” See John Gramlich, “The gap between the number of blacks and whites in prison is shrinking,” January 12, 2018. www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/01/12/shrinking-gap-between-number-of-blacks-and-whites-in-prison/ (accessed May 31, 2018). We read the headlines that report the killing of unarmed African Americans by law enforcement officials. In our prisons, the number of inmates of color, notably those who are brown and black, is grossly disproportionate.⁴ Despite the great blessings of liberty that this country offers, we must admit the plain 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. At the same time, we reject harsh rhetoric that belittles and dehumanizes law enforcement personnel who labor to keep our communities safe. We also condemn violent attacks against police. We have also seen years of systemic racism working in how resources are allocated to communities that remain *de facto* segregated. As an example, the water crisis in Flint, Michigan, resulted from policy decisions that negatively affected the inhabitants, the majority of whom were African Americans.⁵ We could go on, for the instances of discrimination, prejudice, and racism, sadly, are too many.

In Christ,
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