

PEACE AND JUSTICE



open wide our hearts

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

Article – 1

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

In November 2018 the Catholic bishops of the United States released a Pastoral Letter Against Racism called, **Open Wide Our Hearts**. The letter is a powerful invitation for all the people of God to “face courageously the vice of racism, . . . reach out generously to the victims of this evil, to assist the conversion needed in those who still harbor racism, and to begin to change policies and structures that allow racism to persist.” At usccb.org/racism, you can read the entire letter, get new resources and find ideas for how we can respond.

Holy Scripture boldly proclaims, “See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are” (1 Jn 3:1). This love “comes from God and unites us to God; through this unifying process it makes us a ‘we’ which transcends our divisions and makes us one, until in the end God is ‘all in all’ (1 Cor 15:28).”¹ By the work of the Holy Spirit, the Church is called to share with all the world this gift of love. As Pope Francis points out, “The salvation which God has wrought, and the Church joyfully proclaims, is for everyone. God has found a way to unite himself to every human being in every age.”² Through his Cross and Resurrection, Christ united the one human race to the Father. However, even though Christ’s victory over sin and death is complete, we still live in a world affected by them. As bishops of the Catholic Church in the United States, we want to address one particularly destructive and persistent form of evil. Despite many promising strides made in our country, racism still infects our nation.

What Is Racism?

Racism arises when—either consciously or unconsciously—a person holds that his or her own race or ethnicity is superior, and therefore judges persons of other races or ethnicities as inferior and unworthy of equal regard. When this conviction or attitude leads individuals or groups to exclude, ridicule, mistreat, or unjustly discriminate against persons on the basis of their race or ethnicity, it is sinful. Racist acts are sinful because they violate justice. They reveal a failure to acknowledge the human dignity of the persons offended, to recognize them as the neighbors Christ calls us to love (Mt 22:39). 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. Cain forgets this truth in his hatred of his brother. Recall the words in the First Letter of John: “Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life remaining in him” (1 Jn 3:15). Racism shares in the same evil that moved Cain to kill his brother. It arises from suppressing the truth that his brother Abel was also created in the image of God, a human equal to himself. 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.

In Christ,
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