



# open wide our hearts

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

*This is the eleventh in a series of articles focused on helping share the important messages contained in this pastoral letter issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.*

## ***Walk Humbly with God: Conversion of All and Our Commitment to Life***

As St. Paul proclaimed, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Of these I am the foremost. But for that reason, I was mercifully treated, so that in me, as the foremost, Christ Jesus might display all his patience as an example for those who would come to believe in him for everlasting life” (1 Tm 1:15-16). St. Paul’s own conversion is a powerful reminder of how God’s grace can transform even the hardest of hearts. Prayer and working toward conversion must be our first response in the face of evil actions. “I tell you, in just the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance” (Lk 15:7). Therefore, we must never limit our understanding of God’s power to bring about the conversion of even those whose hearts appear completely frozen by the sin of racism. Our communities must never cease to invite and encourage them in love to abandon these sinful thoughts and destructive ways.

Conversion is an essential aspect of evangelization, which “is a question not only of preaching the Gospel in ever wider geographic areas or to ever greater numbers of people, but also of affecting and as it were upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, mankind’s criteria of judgment.” Like St. Paul, this requires us to examine our most deeply held “values, [our] points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life”—all that may be “in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation.”

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).

Excerpt from “Open Wide Our Hearts: the enduring call to love”

A pastoral letter against racism from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops