



open wide our hearts

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

This is the eighth 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: Being Open to Encounter and New Relationships

“To walk humbly with God” requires even more. We know that we do not have all the answers, but a missionary disciple is one who willingly meets every problem and every sinful attitude with the confidence that comes from a deep love of Jesus. As Pope Benedict XVI has said, “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”

The Christian community should draw from this central, ongoing encounter with Christ and seek to combat racism with love, recalling the insight of Pope Francis that “if we have received the love which restores meaning to our lives, how can we fail to share that love with others?” With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, this wellspring of strength and courage must move us to act. Consequently, we all need to take responsibility for correcting the injustices of racism and healing the harms it has caused.

To work at ending racism, we need to engage the world and encounter others—to see, maybe for the first time, those who are on the peripheries of our own limited view. Knowing that the Lord has taken the divine initiative by loving us first, we can boldly go forward, reaching out to others. We must invite into dialogue those we ordinarily would not seek out. We must work to form relationships with those we might regularly try to avoid. This demands that we go beyond ourselves, opening our minds and hearts to value and respect the experiences of those who have been harmed by the evil of racism. Love also requires us to invite a change of heart in those who may be dismissive of other’s experiences or whose hearts may be hardened by prejudice or racism. Only by forging authentic relationships can we truly see each other as Christ sees us. Love should then move us to take what we learn from our encounters and examine where society continues to fail our brothers and sisters, or where it perpetuates inequity, and seek to address those problems.

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

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