



open wide our hearts

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

This is the ninth 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: Resolving to Work for Justice and Educating Ourselves

To foster, in part, such encounters, and to express our strong and renewed resolve to work for justice, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops formed an Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism. We charge this Ad Hoc Committee to implement the vision of this pastoral letter. We also task the leadership of our bishops' conference to seek meaningful opportunities that deepen understanding, foster reconciliation, and publicly witness to the Church's commitment to ending racism.

Nationally, taking concrete action should include advocating for equality in how laws are implemented and advocating for moral budgets that reduce barriers to economic well-being, appropriate healthcare, education, and training. We can also learn from the example of other countries and from certain institutions that have recognized past wrongs and have come to understand the truth of their history.

Locally, including in our own parishes, practical plans should be made to provide further opportunities for qualified candidates who historically have been excluded, such as through hiring and contracting practices. Likewise, within our dioceses, taking concrete action entails that struggling parishes, schools, and organizations receive resources and training for catechesis, youth ministry, and other pastoral needs. It also means providing necessary support to families, seniors, and ex-offenders.

"A change of heart," the Pontifical Commission on Justice and Peace points out, "cannot occur without strengthening spiritual convictions regarding respect for other races and ethnic groups." We must, therefore, form the consciences of our people, especially the young, "by clearly presenting the entire Christian doctrine on this subject. [We] particularly [ask] pastors, preachers, teachers and catechists to explain the true teaching of Scripture and Tradition about the origin of all people in God, their final common destiny in the Kingdom of God, the value of the precept of fraternal love, and the total incompatibility between racist exclusivism and the universal calling of all to the same salvation in Jesus Christ."

Our individual efforts to encounter, grow, and witness, to change our hearts about racism, must also find their way into our families. We urge each person to consider the dignity of others in the face of jokes, conversations, and complaints motivated by racial prejudice. We can provide experiences for children that expose them to different cultures and peoples. We can also draw upon the incredible diversity of the Church worldwide in providing education within the family and make it clear that God dwells in the equal dignity of each person.

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

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