



ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF BURLINGTON

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Date: September 14, 2020
To: Catholic School Principals
From: Jeanne Gearon, Superintendent of Schools

Re: Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love

In response to the call from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I am asking each of our schools to take active steps to promulgate the Church's teachings regarding racism. "Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love" is the document prepared by the Bishops and offers us guidance in how to begin and/or continue educating our communities (faculty/staff, students, etc.) regarding the sin of racism.

The sin of racism has and continues to impact our country/world in very real ways. It is my expectation that you will utilize the Bishop's pastoral letter and the supporting materials as part of your school's endeavors to teach the truth about racism and what a truly Catholic/Christian response should be. As the Bishop's state in the opening of the document:

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)."

Below are a few suggestions for incorporating the teachings of the pastoral letter:

- Faculty/Staff:
 - Provide each member of the faculty/staff a copy of the pastoral letter (this can be electronically)
 - Ask each of them to read it and develop strategies to incorporate the teachings into their classes and/or their ministry.
 - Dedicate time during faculty/staff meetings to delve more deeply into each component of the document
 - Utilizing the companion study guide as a tool in doing this would be very beneficial.
 - If you prepare a weekly/monthly update for your faculty, include in this communication piece different teachings from the document and share ways in which that particular teaching can be incorporated/lived within your community.
- Students:
 - Intentionally weave the prayer to end racism into your school's prayer life

- Share the stories of saints from various cultures (perhaps one a week/month). Teach the students about the virtues this saint espoused and share ways the students can emulate this saint.
- In developmentally appropriate ways, share the stories of those who have been impacted by the sin of racism and lead students in developing an understanding of the impact this sin has on the lives of others.
- Explore ways to connect your students with individuals from various cultures. This could be in the form of guest speakers (post COVID restrictions), video presentations, outreach efforts, etc.
- Middle School and High School: incorporate the pastoral letter and the companion study guide into religion class as well as other subject areas as appropriate.
- Early Education/Elementary: incorporate the book “Everyone Belongs” and the companion study guide into religion class.
- Parents/Guardians:
 - Share with parents/guardians that you are taking intentional steps to share the truth of the sin of racism.
 - Provide them a link to the pastoral letter as well as to the companion study guide.
 - Offer them the opportunity to come into school to preview the book “Everyone Belongs” and share the companion study guide with them.
 - In your weekly/monthly school newsletter, share teachings from the pastoral letter and offer suggestions on how to live out the teachings.
- Community at large:
 - Publish in the bulletin or on your website an overview of how your school is taking intentional steps to address the sin of racism.
 - Hang/Post the “Racism Has No Home Here” materials in visible locations.

To support your efforts, the following are being provided:

- As a PDF:
 - The pastoral letter from the Bishops: “Open Wide Our Hearts”
 - “The Call to Address Racism in Our Hearts and Communities” issued by the USCCB
 - The 2 study guides referenced above
- To be distributed to your school:
 - A copy of the book titled “Everyone Belongs”
 - “Racism Has No Home Here” display materials

If you have any questions and/or need any assistance in this endeavor, please feel free to reach out to me.