



Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am pleased to offer this abridged revision of *Love Thy Neighbor As Thyself: U.S. Catholic Bishops Speak Against Racism*. Initially issued by the Committee on African American Catholics in 2001, as a compilation of more than three dozen articles by bishops from all regions of the country, *Love Thy Neighbor As Thyself* offered tangible examples of local initiatives undertaken to combat racism. This current online resource is a selection of eight hopeful examples. It includes the perspective of several branches of the Catholic family.

These brief articles remain timely and inspirational. They are intended to serve as a platform for further reflection and action in parishes, schools and other Catholic organizations. This tool can help pastoral leaders, educators and parishioners build capacity to relate well in intercultural settings.

As we value God's gift of diversity in the Church we discover that we are stronger proponents in the evangelizing mission of the Church when we work together for the good of all. Thus, it is my hope that this resource will bring us closer to Our Lord's vision that we will grow to love one another as God loves us.

Yours in Christ the Lord,

Most Rev. Daniel E. Flores, Chair
Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church

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Address to the United States Catholic Conference for Their Dialogue on Racism

BY MOST REV. CURTIS J. GUILLORY, SVD



NOVEMBER 1998

I. Twenty years ago this conference promulgated the pastoral letter *Brothers and Sisters to Us: U.S. Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Racism in Our Day*, which stated that racism is a sin because it blots out the image of God and divides the human family. It also provides ideas and programs on how to eradicate racism.

Certainly, much progress has been accomplished. Hopefully, in our discussion, some of you will, in your diocese and archdiocese, talk about what you are doing that is effective in eradicating racism.

Yet as much as we would like to believe that the question of racism in society and in the Church is behind us, ongoing racial incidents continue to remind us that it is a scar in our society and Church that we must face. Examples are blatant incidents such as the brutal killing of James Byrd in Jasper, Texas, or in Independence, Virginia, where a White man by the name of Emmett Cresel

Jr. set Garrett Johnson, a Black man, on fire and then beheaded him. Then there were the church burnings last summer. Though they were not all racially motivated, too

many were. Those are the blatant incidents of racism that get media attention and quick condemnation by people of faith and goodwill. However, there are the more subtle incidents of racism that take place in society and the Church. There is the African American youth who is eyed or followed in the mall or stores. There is the well-dressed African American male who is unable to get a cab, not because he cannot pay for the ride, but simply because he is Black. Only 2 percent of people of color have decision making positions in dioceses and archdioceses. There are 140 websites pushing racial hatred and many of these are



directed toward children, the belief being that if you capture the mind of children you have them forever. There is the African American woman who extends her hand



at the kiss of peace at a Eucharistic celebration and is refused the kiss of peace. Such subtle forms of racism are in many ways much harder to deal with since for the most part, they are only known by the victim and the perpetrator.

II. Beyond Tolerance to Reconciliation. In its report to the president, after hearings on race throughout the country, the President's Advisory Commission on Race said that the president should call on the nation to be more tolerant of race. In the minds of many, tolerance is the goal in racial relations. However, for Christians and Catholics in particular, the goal goes beyond to the deeper level of actual reconciliation.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ and the social teachings of the Church call upon us as teachers and as believers to go beyond tolerance. Tolerance might be the beginning but it is not the end. Tolerance of another means accommodation, existing at a comfortable distance, or co-existing with the other. Tolerance calls one to deal with another of a different ethnic or racial background as required by the law. However, as you so well know, the law does not change hearts. The Church today is being called upon to change hearts with the Word of God, the social teachings of the Church and programs geared toward understanding and respect for the privilege of difference. In Galatians (3:28) "Since everyone of you that has been baptized has been clothed in Christ, there can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither slave or free man, there can be neither male nor female—for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Paul calls us to go beyond tolerance. He calls us to dialogue, to engage in conversation, in extended interaction. He calls us to be reconciled about the past, embrace the reconciled past and be strengthened to face the future.

It is important to mention and to praise the voice of the conference and that of individual bishops who

have put out documents urging acceptance and reconciliation. However, in spite of the progress that has been made, much needs to be done. We are not necessarily advocating new programs, but much good could be done if we revisited and implemented what we have already written: documents such as *Brothers and Sisters to Us*, *Economic Justice For All* and *Love One Another*. These and others such as the Vatican's *Towards a Fraternal Society* are just as relevant today as they were when they were first released.

In his 1994 Apostolic Letter *On the Coming of the Third Millennium*, the Holy Father said that while the great jubilee year of the year 2000 is to be a time of joyful celebration, the joy should be based on forgiveness and reconciliation.

The time has come for us to help our people engage in honest and constructive dialogue that will lead to this reconciliation, trust and understanding. There are those who feel there are no racial problems. Others see race in every incident. Still others, and perhaps the majority of people, want to deal with this scar, but do not know how or where to begin. When Mr. Byrd's sister was asked by a reporter about how she felt toward the three men who had brutally killed her brother, she responded that she and her family forgave them because they were not brought up to hate. What an example for us as we strive to forgive! Armed with the Word of God and the social teachings of the Church, we must help our people so that Jesus' prayer, "That they might all be one," can indeed be a reality. And so let us not grow weary or tired in our own efforts to eradicate racism and to promote true peace and reconciliation among those we serve. ■

Most Rev. Curtis J. Guillory, SVD is the Bishop of Beaumont, Texas.



Remarks *on the* Asian Experience

BY MOST REV. JOHN S. CUMMINS



NOVEMBER 1998

I. Our city of Oakland has a Chinatown a century and a half old. It is a circumscribed downtown neighborhood, which exists as testimony to the history of residential and occupational restrictions on the Chinese in the area.

II. This downtown site rests in the context of the state of California. Despite the contribution of the Chinese to the building of railroads, farms, wineries and cities, California in the 1860s barred Chinese children from attending public schools. They were not

allowed to testify in court against those of European descent. In 1882, California led the United States Congress to pass a Chinese Exclusion Act prohibiting Chinese laborers from entering the United States and Chinese immigrants already present from becoming United States citizens. That law lasted from 1882 until it was repealed in 1943.

III. Chinese are one illustration of the Asian experience in the United States. That word "Asia" represents a very big world. As someone has said, "from the Bosphorus to Vladivostok" and from Indonesia to Korea. For us in particular, that word includes





some of the most ancient Christian churches in the Near and Middle East and in India, predominantly Oriental Rite, and the youngest churches as well. We further add, that from the perspective of our Migration and Refugee Services Committee, the pastoral category includes not just Asian, but Pacific Islanders as well.

IV. The United States' experience records these acts of exclusion. It witnesses too, the inability of Filipino workers in the early part of the century to bring their wives with them. There are marks of burdensome labor practices in California and Hawaii, affecting very much the Japanese and Filipinos. Through the years Asians have suffered from very low immigration quotas.

That represents the past. There are newer elements in the present. Though often seen as an "acceptable minority," a label Asians feel patronizing, many from Asia still feel the glass ceiling of opportunity in so many areas of life. We can add to this also a sense of concern among recently arrived Moslems, whether they will receive acceptance in this country.

V. I would add two current comments. One of these is from history and heritage. There has existed, even to

the present, a class preference in many Asian communities, often economically based, clearly social, distinguishing and discriminating. The wisdom of Paul VI, in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, can be heard: "All cultures are in need of evangelization."

Secondly, many first-generation Asians were rural and uneducated. They accepted their disadvantaged status because they wanted a better life for the generations to come. Today we see a much more assertive leadership in Asian communities, even in better-educated new arrivals. Second and third generations here have benefited from educational opportunity and have entered professions, technical fields and in more recent times, politics. Part of that rising self-awareness belongs to our Asian Catholics. These represent two million members of the Church, who seek, albeit politely, recognition, felt by some long overdue, on the part of the church leadership. They seek acknowledgment of their presence, participation and generous contribution to the life of the Church in this country. ■

Most Rev. John S. Cummins *is the Bishop Emeritus of Oakland, California.*



Remarks *on the* Native American Prospective

BY MOST REV. PAUL A. ZIPFEL



NOVEMBER 1998

Although I have been in the diocese of Bismarck, North Dakota, for a little less than two years, it has become clear to me that there is both subtle and not-so-subtle discrimination directed at the Native American population.

I would like to suggest some signs of this discrimination that still exist today.

Because so many people do not understand the Treaty Rights that have existed for years, they make the judgment that support of the Native American is nothing more than welfare. As a result the American Indian is often seen as irresponsible and lazy.

Because of the segregation that the reservation brings about, people of other races have little understanding of customs and traditions of our Indian brothers and sisters. In addition, there is little interest in learning about them.

Although efforts are being made by both church and state, many Native Americans have limited opportunities for effective education and health care. Attempts to move into communities outside the reservation can result in unfounded fear. Most feel very unwelcome when they are the minority race.

In my estimation there is much denial of the racism that exists in our own communities. People either don't see it or don't want to see it. When we don't see the problem, there is little chance that it can be corrected. ■

Most Rev. Paul A. Zipfel is the Bishop Emeritus of Bismarck, North Dakota.





Remarks *on the* Hispanic/Latino Prospective

BY MOST REV. GERALD R. BARNES



NOVEMBER 1998

Racism toward the Hispanic/Latino community is a historic and well-documented fact in the United States. One can read the history of the different regions of this country to see that violence and hatred have been directed toward Latinos. Today we see the effects of racism in the political and economic arena, in education, in social concerns, and in our Church.

In the political arena, race is being used to promote anti-Latino sentiments, particularly in statewide initiatives like California's Proposition 187. Other similar initiatives—like affirmative action, anti-bilingual education, and the English Only Movement—are being promoted throughout the United States, and the Latino community is the target of many of these efforts. These initiatives divide the greater community and harm the image of the Latino by promoting negative stereotypes.





Economically, Hispanics have an annual market value of \$372 billion, and yet in many communities they are red-lined and denied credit by a variety of businesses, making it difficult for them to secure loans, to buy insurance, to purchase homes and automobiles. When our economy meets difficult times, it is often the Latino immigrant that is used as the scapegoat.

In many of our communities, Hispanics have the highest high school drop-out rate, and only 10 percent of Hispanics have a college degree. Recent changes in federal and state laws may keep Latinos and other minority groups from attending colleges and universities.

In society, we see Latinos incarcerated in large numbers and we do not see an end in sight. There is also an increase in the number of incidents of violence against Latinos and immigrants. This can be attributed to the constant racist and anti-immigrant hysteria fomented by opportunistic politicians. And federal enforcement agencies are creating strategies to seek out the undocumented, while intimidating and at times ignoring the rights of Latinos, 95 percent of whom are U.S. citizens or legal residents. The victims are usually poor and do not have the skills to file complaints or lawsuits.

In the Church, many Hispanic Catholics struggle to be accepted and welcomed by some pastors and by parishioners. It was not too long ago that in some churches Latinos were relegated to the church's basement for Mass, sacramental preparation, and other

services. Or, Mass was scheduled during hours of the day that were inconvenient to families. In the area of vocations, with thirty million Latinos in the United States, there are only about five-hundred born Hispanic priests.

My father was among those who had to attend Mass in the basement of his parish church because he was "Mexican" and "Mexicans" were not allowed to worship in the church. My father was a third-generation U.S. citizen.

As bishop, I have witnessed and heard church employees refer to a competent sixty-year-old Latina secretary as "the little Mexican girl." When asked why certain programs were not offered to Latinos, the response was "they can't be taught." Latinos were not counted as parishioners for fear that the parish would have to offer them services; or when services were requested by Latinos, responses were made "What more do they want, they already have a Mass?" [And when asked if] diocesan and parish programs designed for leadership people might be offered in Spanish, a response is given "You don't understand, this is only for leaders."

The point is *what is the source of this struggle for the Latino population*, and why? I believe it to be the effect of racism in society. ■

Most Rev. Gerald R. Barnes *is the Bishop of San Bernardino, California.*



PART TWO:
CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING



Racial Harmony: A Statement *of the* Catholic Bishops *of* Louisiana

CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF LOUISIANA

Most Rev. Gregory M. Aymond, Most Rev. Dominic Carmon, SVD, Most Rev. William B. Friend,
Most Rev. Alfred C. Hughes, Most Rev. Sam G. Jacobs, Most Rev. Michael Jarrell,
Most Rev. Edward J. O'Donnell, Most Rev. Francis B. Schulte, and Most Rev. Jude Speyrer

FEBRUARY 1997

The teaching of the Roman Catholic Church on racism is clear.¹ Racism is morally wrong. To persist obstinately in this stance is unchristian.

Racism is the theory or practice which assumes that one race or ethnic stock is superior to another. It denies the equal dignity of all the members of the human family.

Sacred Scripture testifies that God created us with an equal dignity and destiny (Gn 1:26). After sin introduced division and oppression, the Lord Jesus restored at least in principle equality and respect for neighbor and foreigner, man and woman. He restored the unity of all in one people and one body. He taught us to recognize His face in every brother and sister. St. Paul in reflecting on this wrote that in Christ Jesus there is no male or female, no Greek or Roman, no slave or free person (Gal 3:28). We share a common dignity in Jesus Christ. Through the Holy Spirit we enjoy communion with the triune God and are bonded with one another as brothers and sisters. We are now called to realize in practice God's original created plan, restored in Christ Jesus.

Racism continues to exist in our time despite Christian teaching. We should remember, however, that racism as an ideology is a rather late phenom-

enon in history. Only at the end of the eighteenth century was the word "race" used for the first time to classify human beings biologically.

The theories about essential differences of a hereditary biological nature led to fostering at that time and subsequently a racist ideology which in turn served as a convenient tool to justify the practice already in use by slave traders and profiteers. The oppression of others can flourish only when the basic truths of God's creative action are forgotten. This was dramatically demonstrated again in the 1930s and 1940s when a genetic concept of race became popular.

Contemporary scientific research on the degree of genetic variations in people indicates that almost all genetic diversity is accounted for by variation within populations, rather than by differences between populations. Individual variations in human DNA profiles overwhelm any interpopulation differences, no matter how the populations are ethnically or racially classified. Therefore, the superiority or inferiority of races cannot be substantiated by genetics.

In 1984 the Catholic Bishops of Louisiana insisted, "There is no ethnic hierarchy among the children of God; ethnic gifts deserve the same reverence and respect that we hold for life itself." We also lamented that racism still affected our country, our state and



even our Church. Twice since then, in 1989 and 1990, the Church in Louisiana has condemned all forms or expressions of racism.

Let us then make it clear again. To hold that one race is inherently superior to another is a serious sin. To persist obstinately in this stance is incompatible with God's original creation and our redemption in Christ Jesus.

In a sense it is easy and natural to observe certain physical differences which exist among people. Are we wrong to notice such differences? We answer: In our lives together as members of different ethnic and family backgrounds it is natural for us to notice differences which may exist among us. We are helped in our own personal growth and development when we can appreciate and learn from such differences. It is only when we presume to boast of having superiority over others, or judge unfairly, or discriminate against their basic rights as human persons that we offend. Moreover, the absence of personal fault for the level of racism does not absolve us of all responsibility. Social harm demands a social remedy.

It is our conviction that the people of Louisiana truly want to promote racial harmony. Citizens, Black and White, live side by side in a number of neighborhoods, attend community schools, and work together in constructive ways. In the Catholic Church, some African Americans prefer to remain in historically Black parishes, others are welcomed into territorial parishes. There is a helpful twinning of some Black parishes with territorial parishes. Vietnamese, Hispanic, and other immigrant peoples are being welcomed as well.

We also know, however, that recent political campaigns have been tinged with slightly veiled racial rhetoric. The media coverage of events can sometimes give undue attention to more extreme racial posi-

tions. Some unsolved crimes involving the burning of African American churches arouse anxieties about the possibility of racial motivation. Prejudices against immigrants can also degenerate into xenophobia or even racial hatred. There are also many subtle ways in which racial attitudes and prejudices can influence feelings, judgments and actions in us all.

Sacred Scripture offers us a graced corrective. If we place ourselves humbly and sincerely before the revelation which God gives to us in Sacred Scripture and pray for the gift of His Holy Spirit to help us to understand, we will be strengthened in the understanding of God's way and given the grace to live it. Hence we recommend for this purpose reflections on the Sacred Scriptures.²

It is our hope that the pondering of God's Word will then lead to an inner conversion of heart and some constructive initiatives.

CONCLUSION

The good news of the victory of Jesus Christ over sin and death encourages us to proclaim anew this call to conversion and His invitation to new life. We cannot tolerate racism. We cannot allow fears and hatreds to drive us apart.

We repent and ask for forgiveness for any failures in the past or present and the grace to recognize the seriousness of this injustice and to resist it more strongly and forthrightly. We pledge with God's grace to be more faithful to the deeper and fuller implications of the gospel message entrusted to us. We seek to promote the reconciliation that God offers to us in Christ Jesus. We want to work with all people of good will. We seek collaboration with the faithful of other religions.

We thank God who has made us all in His image and likeness, called us to call Him our Father and to live



as brothers and sisters in one family. We rejoice in the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ, who has given us the grace to know repentance and the forgiveness of our sins and the grace to live new life in Him. May the faith and love of Mary the Mother of Jesus and the Mother of the Church inspire and help us through the Holy Spirit to live truly as brothers and sisters of her Son, Jesus Christ. ■

Most Rev. Gregory M. Aymond *is the Archbishop of New Orleans*; Most Rev. Dominic Carmon, SVD *is the Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus of New Orleans, Louisiana*; Most Rev. William B. Friend *is the Bishop Emeritus of Shreveport*; Most Rev. Alfred C. Hughes *is the Archbishop Emeritus of New Orleans, former bishop of Baton Rouge, Louisiana*; Most Rev. Sam G. Jacobs *is the Bishop Emeritus of Houma-Thibodaux, former bishop of Alexandria, Louisiana*; Most Rev. Michael Jarrell *is the Bishop of Lafayette, former bishop of Houma-Thibodaux, Louisiana*; Most Rev. Edward J. O'Donnell (deceased) *was the Bishop*

of Lafayette, Louisiana; Most Rev. Francis B. Schulte *is the Archbishop Emeritus of New Orleans, Louisiana*; Most Rev. Jude Speyrer (deceased) *was the Bishop of Lake Charles, Louisiana*.

NOTES

- 1 *The Church and Racism: A Statement of the Pontifical Commission on Peace and Justice*, 1988; National Conference of Catholic Bishops [NCCB], *Brothers and Sisters to Us: U.S. Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Racism in Our Day*, 1979; Catholic Black Bishops, *What We Have Seen and Heard*, 1984; NCCB, *For the Love of One Another*, 1989; and a series of statements on racism by Louisiana's bishops in 1984, 1989 and 1990.
- 2 For example: Mt 22:1-14 (Guests at a banquet), Mk 12:28-31 (Great Commandment), Jn 15:12 (Love one another), Acts 10:1-48 (Story of Cornelius), Rom 13:10 (Love fulfills law), 1 Cor 12:12-31 (Mystical Body), Gal 3:26-28 (. . . no Jew or Greek . . .), Eph 4:1-15 (Support Body of Christ in love), Eph 4:31-32 (Get rid of anger), 1 Jn 2:7-11 (One who hates his brother is in darkness), 1 Jn 4:20-21 (Whoever loves God must love his brother).





Racism: A Tarnished Reflection *of* Ourselves

BY MOST REV. JAMES A. GRIFFIN



MAY 1997

I want to write to you about something which I believe disfigures the face of society, the Church and individuals: racism. Recent events in our world, our country and our local community remind us that despite our efforts and our progress, racism remains with us. This is true in spite of some advances over the last three or four decades to correct this unjust situation. We still see racism in inferior schooling for minority children, discriminatory treatment toward minority workers and the unfair practices of business and industry. We hear it in racial slurs, belittling references to minorities and outright insults directed to persons because of their race.

Racism is a serious sin. It is a refusal to accept God's creative plan—that all human beings are made in his image and likeness, that all persons have the same heavenly Father, regardless of their race or nationality. The teaching of Jesus Christ, "you shall love your neighbor as yourself," is intended to be inclusive, extending even to those whom we reject because of their ethnic or racial differences (see Lk 10:25-37). The Catholic Church proclaims that all races are children of God and brothers and sisters to one another. In doing this, she remains true to Gospel faith and Christian tradition.

This Gospel truth is echoed in our country's Declaration of Independence: "We hold

these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

This basic principle is spelled out in the Constitution and in repeated legislative enactments over the past two hundred years. We can rightly say that racism is un-American and contrary to the laws of our nation. We must recognize that overt acts of racism are criminal.

We are all responsible for our society. We must each contribute in our own way to the molding of the society of which we are a part. We must also ensure the rights of all other members of society to do the same. Only when all people are free to influence the development of culture and society can that society become everything it can be and which we want it to be for the sake of the common good, for our own sakes and for future generations.

Blatant forms of racist practices can be readily known and condemned. It is the subtle forms that elude our perception. Before public acts occur, racism resides in the mind and heart. Prejudicial attitudes and feelings exist which at times are not so easily recognized. These can give rise to racist talk and racist activities, and ultimately to racist practices throughout our society.



Racism flows from personal attitudes and actions into the human world around us; it becomes a social evil. Our social institutions and structures are affected. None seems to escape: families and schools, public institutions and governmental programs, large corporations and small businesses, even our own church communities. As responsible members of our society, we are obliged to do our part to eradicate racism from this society—from the whole and from each of its component parts.

RACISM IN THE CHURCH

As a church, we must examine and confront the subtle forms of racism of which we are guilty. The Catholic Church in the United States is an overwhelmingly White church. As the bishops' Committee on African American Catholics stated, "History reveals that racism has played a powerful role in discouraging African Americans from the Catholic Church as a spiritual home." It is therefore vitally important that predominantly White parishes learn to worship and live as open invitations to people of all races. We need to change our hospitality habits in order to become a true gathering of believers. We must face the challenge of liberating ourselves from the bonds of racism. Racism, as a sin, harms not only the victim but the sinner too. We are held bound by our prejudices and our fears of letting go of control and power. Perhaps racism does not register as a "sin" in "my parish"—but it can be present. We must name and confess our prejudices in order to be freed from them. How does your parish welcome the stranger and celebrate diversity?

Those reading this letter who are Catholic must remember that we find our unity with Christ and one another in the Eucharist. Each time I distribute holy communion to various congregations around the diocese, I am made aware of our unity in diversity. The faces of those receiving Christ are of all colors and yet all hunger after the same Lord. In this hunger is the key to our unity.

RACISM'S PERSONAL ROOTS

If we are to remove the sin and crime of racism from our midst, we must start with the self. All social sin begins in the choices of individuals to be unjust and is sustained by our blindness to those initial choices. As St. John says, "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves." We can say the same thing about prejudices: We all have them, though we may never have faced them honestly.

In order to overcome this blindness, I ask each of you to make a personal review of any prejudices you might hold. To confront our prejudices, we need to conduct a rigorous self-examination of our attitudes. With the teaching of the Church on human dignity as our "compass," we also need another tool, a mirror in which to examine ourselves. I would suggest that every individual ask himself/herself the following questions as a kind of "morality mirror" in which to see his or her own prejudices:

- What prejudices do I now have? Can I identify the sources of those prejudices?
- What prejudices have I taken from my family and home life?
- What prejudices have I formed or accepted as a result of my experiences in life or from the media?
- How do my prejudices manifest themselves in my everyday living?
- How would I feel were I confronted by people who hold the same prejudices about me that I do about others?
- What one action can I take to begin to combat or remove the major prejudices in my life?
- What further action can I take to work on behalf of victims of racism, whether they be children, young people or adults?



This aspect of taking concrete action is especially important; if we can convince ourselves and others to act as if we truly believe in the equality and dignity of every person of every race, we will find that this action will change our belief. Consistently acting in a certain way begins to form beliefs—or, as may be the case, to “reform” beliefs—and changing our beliefs reforms our behavior.

Personal conversion and pastoral charity are necessary, but this conversion from prejudice must be linked to a sharing of power and influence with minority people. In this move to share power and influence, citizens in the majority race signal that racism is not to be tolerated. We cannot let economic fears deter us from acting justly. We cannot cling to power and control when doing so results in the perpetuation of racism and oppression.

In closing I want to address and challenge specific groups of citizens:

- To parents: I remind you that you are the first and best teachers of your children. By word, but even more by example, you form their moral intelligence. Be sure that respect for all sisters and brothers is part of the framework of your teaching. Seek ways to provide your children with positive experiences of many ethnic groups.
- To religious leaders: Be that prophetic voice to challenge the consciences and actions of your people on this issue of racism. Ask them to reflect seriously on what it means to be sisters and brothers, children of God. Pinpoint the real issues that your parish or congregation must address regarding racism.
- To government officials and community leaders: Do not allow the ugly head of racism to arise in our community. Above all, do not allow members of your staff to “trade” on this issue of racism for political gain.
- To business leaders: The “bottom line” cannot be the sole criterion of your profession. Business must be guided by ethics and principles, chief among which must be respect for every individual regardless of race and opportunity for every employee to rise to his or her full potential with no limits or exclusionary practices based on race.





—To teachers: You mold the future of our community. You have the best chance to eradicate the roots of racism from families and communities. You have the opportunity to plant the seeds of racial fairness in the hearts of our children. Please make the most of this opportunity.

—To all men and women of good will: The value of each of us is dependent on the value which we place on others. Once we make or allow the judgment that any other is expendable or to be limited in opportunity because of race, we open the door to the same fate befalling ourselves based on the same or other irrational criteria. Let us defend our own human dignity by defending the human dignity of every one of our sisters and brothers. Among other things, this means adopting an attitude of “zero tolerance” of racist comments or activity taking place even when you are not directly involved or affected. Do not turn your back in indifference or seek to take the easy way out.

To write of our shortcomings and to confess our failures is never easy or attractive, but this is the only way to face and eradicate racism in our midst. In this Easter season, I ask you to join me in prayer, reflection and action. I also ask you to carry with you and often refer to the “morality mirror” on this subject of racism which accompanies this letter. I close by reminding you of the final words of the pastoral letter on racism issued by the U.S. bishops in 1979. These same words were quoted in our subsequent pastoral, *For the Love of One Another* (1989):

There must be no turning back along the road of justice, no sighing for bygone times of privilege, no nostalgia for simple solutions from another age. For we are children of the age to come, when the first shall be last and the last first, when blessed are they who serve Christ the Lord in all his brothers and sisters, especially those who are poor and suffer injustice. ■

Most Rev. James A. Griffin is the Bishop Emeritus of Columbus, Ohio.



Moving Beyond Racism: *Learning to See with the Eyes of Christ*

CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF ILLINOIS

Most Rev. Edwin M. Conway, Most Rev. Thomas G. Doran, His Eminence Francis Cardinal George, OMI,
Most Rev. Raymond E. Goedert, Most Rev. John R. Gorman, Most Rev. Wilton D. Gregory, Most Rev. Joseph L. Imesch,
Most Rev. Thad J. Jakubowski, Most Rev. Roger L. Kaffer, Most Rev. Gerald F. Kicanas, Most Rev. George J. Lucas,
Most Rev. John R. Manz, Most Rev. John J. Myers, Most Rev. Joseph N. Perry, Most Rev. Michael Wivchar, CSSR

APRIL 2000

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

God's wondrous generosity to the human family was made visible in Jesus' welcoming, during his earthly ministry, all that sought the light of truth. Jesus, even before his resurrection, entered the lives of Samaritans, Pharisees, Roman occupiers, tax collectors, sinners, the powerful and very ordinary people. Through love and the healing that comes from love, he redefined their relationship to his Father and to one another by welcoming them to himself.

In the Gospels, Jesus speaks with authority (Mk 1:27). This authority comes from his being anointed with divine Sonship; this authority comes clear in Jesus' speaking divine truth in human words. When he ascended into heaven, Jesus imparted that same authority to the apostles and their successors in the Church, the bishops, telling them to go forth and teach all nations (Mt 28:18-20). Conscious of that charge, bishops teach what the faith tells us is true and, in the light of faith, address those contemporary moral and social issues, which affect the basic human dignity Christ restored. We, with all men and women of faith, look at the world with eyes of Christ.

Some years back, concerned Catholics actively involved in ministry in the African American commu-

nity asked the bishops of the Ecclesiastical Province of Chicago (the state of Illinois) to speak to the sin of racism in our society. It disturbed us to hear again reports that people of color were sometimes made to feel unwelcome, even in Catholic parishes. In this letter, we, the Catholic Bishops of Illinois, desire to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ by speaking to a grave personal and social evil: the sin of racism.

We begin with three facts. First, racism exists here; it is part of the American landscape. Second, racism is completely contrary to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Third, all baptized Catholics have a moral obligation to work toward the elimination of racism.

What is meant by racism? Racism is a personal sin and social disorder rooted in the belief that one race is superior to another. It involves not only prejudice but also the use of religious, social, political, economic or historical power to keep one race privileged.

Racism exists, in some form, among all peoples; in any form it is intolerable and unacceptable. This document focuses on racism against African Americans, because the centuries-old Black-White dynamic in this country seems to bear deeper dimensions of prejudice than any other form of racism. Addressing the complexity of the Black-White division, however, will help us address all forms of ethnic and racial injustice, no matter where or how it manifests itself.



Racism is personal, institutional, cultural and internal. Personal racism shows itself in an attitude or action taken by an individual to diminish the God-given dignity or rights of another because of race. An example of personal racism in action is the verbal or mental demeaning of African Americans simply because of their color.

Institutional racism allows racist attitudes or practices to shape the structures of an organization. Institutional racism reveals itself, for example, when promotions are manipulated so that African Americans are not fairly considered for certain positions.

Cultural racism is the extension of this sinful attitude to the mores, standards, customs, language and group life of a whole society. One culture's ways of thinking and behaving are then regarded as the only way to live. All other social patterns are dismissed as deviations or dangers.

Internalized racism is a sense of inferiority or lack of self-esteem because one belongs to a particular race. When an African American child grows up believing that to be Black is inferior, he or she is a victim of internalized racism.

The teaching of the U.S. bishops on racism has been forthright and clear:

Racism is a sin: a sin that divides the human family, blots out the image of God among specific members of that family and violates the fundamental human dignity of those called to be children of the same Father. (*Brothers and Sisters to Us: U.S. Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Racism in Our Day*; Washington, D.C., 1979, 3)

Racism distorts the word of God in both the Old and New Testaments (Gn 1:26; Gal 3:27-29). The Holy Scriptures insist that every person is formed in the image and likeness of God and that all are one in

Christ Jesus. Rather than being built on the firm foundation of divine truth, racism is built on the shifting sands of personal insecurity, self-deception and the idolatry of racial superiority.

Since the publication of *Brothers and Sisters to Us* twenty years ago, some progress has been made in the struggle to overcome the sin of racism. African Americans have been elected to public office and risen to leadership positions, ordained, religious and lay, in the Church and in businesses. The number of African American youth who are attending college is steadily increasing, and the gap between the median income of African Americans and other Americans is slowly shrinking. There are real changes in the growth of a sense of fairness and in levels of attainment by African Americans in the general society.

These and other signs of change in attitudes and behavior have lulled some into thinking that the battle against racism is almost won. That is not the case. Events continue to remind us that racism thrives. Look at the brutal and racially motivated death by dragging last year of an African American in Texas. Consider the more recent aggravated sexual assault on a Haitian prisoner by members of the Brooklyn Police force. Search the websites filled with racially charged hate speech on the Internet. All this is so blatantly racist that it can shock and therefore move us to ask again how to confront more effectively the sin of racism.

Any confrontation cannot ignore the more subtle forms of racist actions: realtors who manipulate sales and steer clients along racial lines; law enforcement officers who routinely profile Black drivers for police checks; department store detectives who automatically follow young Black males; parents who drive past an excellent school to register their children at another because a substantial number of the students in the first school are African American; groups who deliberately avoid contact with racially diverse or culturally different communities.



Almost unconsciously, the sin of racism can touch and stain every aspect of life, from friendships to work relationships, from where people recreate to what programs they watch on television. Given the long history of racism in our country, how can anyone hope to abolish at last this moral plague?

In his apostolic letter, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente (On the Coming of the Third Millennium)*, Pope John Paul II invites us to “broaden our horizons” and so “see things from the perspective of Christ.” This vision gives hope. At the beginning of the third millennium, all have an opportunity to be renewed in the Father’s everlasting love. We have an opportunity to see the world and its peoples through the eyes of Christ. We are given the chance to open ourselves to the Spirit. The new millennium is a time for us to say with one voice: “We will not live with the sin of racism any longer. Racism must end now.” But to make that declaration ring true, we must turn our lives over to the Divine Redeemer who alone can save and transform us. Through Christ’s gracious power, we can come to a conversion of heart, commit ourselves to change and live in hope.

CONVERSION OF HEART

Conversion is the response to God’s self-revelation as love. Infinite love calls us to a transformation of mind and heart, a turning away from sin and an embrace of God’s way for us. Once converted, our eyes are opened; we see what is truly important. We become, with God’s grace, free, responsible and holy.

Conversion changes individuals, and individuals change society. Overcoming the sin of racism begins by opening ourselves to God’s Spirit, who draws all to holiness. The Spirit makes each of us a member of the Body of Christ, and this spiritual relationship is the source of our hope for personal and social change. In Christ, we recognize racism as a division contrary to his will for his people, a division the Spirit will heal.

COMMITMENT TO CHANGE

Relying on God’s grace, seeing with Christ’s eyes, living in the Holy Spirit, what should we do to dismantle racism? Concrete, visible steps will vary from diocese to diocese, from community to community. Here are some actions, some small and some larger, which all can take:

- Pray for an end to racism.
- Take a personal inventory of your own heart and discover what has to change.
- Seek opportunities to know and learn from a person of a different race.
- Identify racist behavior in our community, speak with others and make plans to oppose it.
- Refuse to use biased language and to tell jokes tinged with racist attitudes.
- Teach children to move beyond mere toleration and to accept open-heartedly people of all races.
- Avoid investing in companies which support or practice racist policies and tell the company why you are withdrawing your money.
- Elect public officials who work for racial justice.
- Join community groups, which nurture relationships of trust among peoples of different races and ethnic groups.
- Be critical of how violent crime is focused on and reported; ask media people to publicize good people and actions in every racial group.
- Have your parish sponsor workshops which both present racism in all its complexity and evaluate it morally.



- Help organize ecumenical prayer services inclusive of different racial and ethnic groups.
- Speak and live the truth that you acquire by seeing with the eyes of Christ.

LIVING WITH HOPE

The theological virtue of hope is not the same as wishing for the impossible. Christian hope stirs up in us the desire that God’s kingdom [will] come, here and in eternity. We place our trust in the promises of Christ and rely on his grace rather than on our own strength.

It would be naive to think that racism will disappear overnight; it is too deeply embedded in the American experience. But change will come if we remain constant and never lose sight of the goal. The goal is visible when we see with the eyes of Christ, for our hope of ultimate victory is the Lord who desires that we be one in him.

As the bishops of the Catholic Church in Illinois, we commit ourselves to speak the truth about racism. We commit ourselves to encouraging dialogue between African Americans and other Americans. We commit ourselves to model in our dioceses a future without racism. Confident in the Lord, we invite all Catholics in Illinois, and all men and women of good will, to join us in the struggle against racism so that, one day, we may all be free.

The springtime for the Gospel which Pope John Paul II prays will mark the new millennium [and] will be a time free of the sin of racism. The time is now; let the place be our dioceses and our state. ■

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Nine Ways to Combat Racism

BY MOST REV. HARRY J. FLYNN



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1. Realize it is a sin.
2. Be open to a change of heart.
3. Don't give in to xenophobia.
4. Avoid racial stereotypes, slurs, jokes. Bring the same to the attention of families and among friends.
5. Speak out against racial negatives.
6. In parishes, make sure all races have positions of leadership.
7. Back Catholic schools in minority neighborhoods.
8. Back legislation that fosters racial equality.
9. Keep the dream of a united world alive. ■

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