

# Stations of the Cross: Overcoming Racism

*People in our day suffer unjustly simply because of the color of their skin or their national origin. Let us acknowledge the sin of racism and work to combat it in our social structures, our institutions, and our hearts.*

## **OPENING PRAYER [condensed from the USCCB Prayer to Address the Sin of Racism<sup>1</sup>]**

**ALL:** Lord of all, we pray for healing to address the persistent sin of racism, which is the rejection of the full humanity of some of your children, and the talents and potential you have given them. We pray for the grace to recognize the systems that do not support the dignity of every person, that do not promote respect for those who are seen as other, who bear the legacy of centuries of discrimination, fear, and violence. Give us eyes to see how the past has shaped the complex present.

**We pray for social structures in which children of color can grow up without fear, in security and dignity, with access to health care and a quality education that will allow them to develop their gifts.**

**Empower us to create a new way forward, with a new sense of community that embraces and celebrates the rich diversity of all. Help us to live out your call to combat racism and hatred. Show us how to live in compassionate solidarity, supported by your grace and your love. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

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## ELEVENTH STATION

*Jesus is crucified*

**Leader:** We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

**ALL:** Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

**Leader:** *But he was pierced for our sins, / crushed for our iniquity. / He bore the punishment that makes us whole, / by his wounds we were healed. (Isaiah 53:5)*

Jesus sacrificed himself on the cross so that we might be healed of all that separates us from God and each other. Each person must turn away from habits and patterns of sin in order to be transformed.

It is easy to recognize an individual sin of racism when someone violates justice or fails to extend the love of Christ to others. But even people who want to live justly cannot escape the taint of racism. When our social structures uphold injustice and perpetuate the effects of racism, we all become, in the words of the U.S. Catholic bishops, “accomplices in racism.”<sup>3</sup> This complicity may not be intentional. Nevertheless, the structures of sin in our own society unfairly deprive some of their basic human rights. When we fail to speak out against these structures and reform them, our complicity cannot be ignored.

Christ died on the cross for the sins of the world. Just as our sinful acts must be forgiven at the cross, so too our failures to act when it was our duty to act must be forgiven at the cross. Racism and the structures of systemic racism that still bedevil us must be confessed and transformed by our loving Savior.

**ALL:** Savior, forgive us for the sins we have committed and also for the sins of omission that allow injustice to persist. Help us to stand up to the structures of sin and become accomplices in the work of justice.

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## TWELFTH STATION

### *Jesus dies on the cross*

**Leader:** We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

**ALL:** Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

**Leader:** *Jesus cried out in a loud voice, . . . “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” . . . [Then] Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. . . . When the centurion who stood facing him saw how he breathed his last he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!” (Mark 15:34,37,39)*  
*(All kneel together for a reflective pause, and then rise.)*

Jesus expressed the feeling of abandonment often experienced by those who are unjustly treated. The centurion recognized the injustice that had taken place and testified to the truth.

We are called to be united with those who suffer injustice. Their pain should be our pain. Like that centurion, we should be the ones affirming the worth of those rejected by others. Are we willing to acknowledge injustice and see others in a new way, to connect with them and testify to their pain?

An examination of conscience might help: Am I taking time to learn the stories of past oppression? Am I actively seeking to listen to the cries of our brothers and sisters who experience racism and rejection today? Am I working to change unjust policies? Do I need to root out attitudes in myself that devalue or cast suspicion on others? Am I taking intentional steps to welcome the stranger, socialize with people from other communities, and learn about people from other cultures, races, and backgrounds?<sup>4</sup>

**ALL:** Jesus, Son of God, when no one else cares, you care. You call us to care as well. Lead us to an ever-deeper conversion that bears fruit in true solidarity with those who suffer from racism.

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## CLOSING PRAYER

**ALL:** Loving God, you call us from every race and ethnicity to be one human family. Our nation has fallen far short of that goal. Too many of our brothers and sisters are ignored, ostracized, mistreated, and even killed because of the evil of racism. Too often, our own ways of thinking are infected by the messages of exclusion and marginalization around us.

Transform our hearts, renew our minds, and inspire our actions to effectively address and overcome racism in our day. Help us form new relationships, transform social structures, and reform public policies to establish justice for all. Then all of us will be able to approach you as one people, equal in our dignity, magnificent in our variety, and joyful in our unity, so that this world may be all that you intend it to be. Amen.

*Stations of the Cross: Overcoming Racism:* originally written by Tom Faletti. Prepared for St. Peter's Parish, Washington, DC, March 2019, and adapted by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, March 2020.

<sup>1</sup> Excerpted and condensed from *Prayer to Address the Sin of Racism*, copyright © 2018, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. All rights reserved. See [www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/racism/prayer-to-address-the-sin-of-racism.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/racism/prayer-to-address-the-sin-of-racism.cfm).

<sup>2</sup> Scripture texts in this work are taken from the *New American Bible, revised edition* © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C. and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved.

<sup>3</sup> *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love – A Pastoral Letter Against Racism*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2018, p. 5. See [www.usccb.org/racism/](http://www.usccb.org/racism/).

<sup>4</sup> Self-examination drawn from “The Call to Address Racism in Our Hearts and Communities,” United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2018. See “Bulletin Inserts” on the Parish Resources page at [www.usccb.org/racism](http://www.usccb.org/racism).

<sup>5</sup> *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love – A Pastoral Letter Against Racism*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2018, p. 28. See [www.usccb.org/racism/](http://www.usccb.org/racism/).