

# 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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## THIRTEENTH STATION

*Jesus is taken down from the cross*

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

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

**Leader:** *Joseph of Arimathea, a distinguished member of the council, . . . came and courageously went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. . . . Having bought a linen cloth, he took him down, wrapped him in the linen cloth and laid him in a tomb. (Mark 15:43,46a)*

In order to claim Jesus's body and give him a proper burial, Joseph of Arimathea sacrificed his own comfort and safety and risked angering the powers of his day. We need to dismantle the structures of racist sin in our day, and we may need to risk our own comfort and safety to do so.

The U.S. Catholic bishops call us to change the structures of society. They say: "The roots of racism have extended deeply into the soil of our society. Racism can only end if we contend with the policies and institutional barriers that perpetuate and preserve the inequality – economic and social – that we still see all around us."<sup>5</sup> Working to change economic and social policies is not easy. Like Joseph of Arimathea, we will need courage. But we cannot remain silent. We must engage with others in respectful conversations and take action to reform structures that perpetuate injustice.

**ALL:** Jesus, the structures of your day were indifferent to the demands of justice. Give us the courage to transform our institutions so that the work of racial justice may bear fruit.

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## FOURTEENTH STATION

*Jesus is laid in the tomb*

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

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

**Leader:** *Taking the body, Joseph wrapped it [in] clean linen and laid it in his new tomb that he had hewn in the rock. Then he rolled a huge stone across the entrance to the tomb and departed. (Mt 27:59-60)*

When the stone was rolled across the entrance to the tomb, marking with finality the apparent end of Jesus's life, all seemed lost. The hope of the world was gone. But the tomb was not the end of the story.

Racism, in all its ugly forms, is also not the end of the story. Jesus makes all things new. He can transform our hearts, and he can help us transform our social structures and institutions to remove the scourge of racism.

Before God we are one human race, and God desires that we dwell in harmony with one another. The U.S. bishops offer inspiration from the prophet Micah: "You have been told, O mortal, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: Only to do justice and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). This is our task. Empowered by God's Spirit, we must humbly but fearlessly engage in the work of racial justice.

**ALL:** Jesus, inspire us with new approaches to the ancient problem of racism. We are your hands and feet. Guide us as we welcome those who are marginalized and as we work for racial justice.

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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/).