

# 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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## FIRST STATION

*Jesus is condemned to death*

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

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

**Leader:** *Pilate said to them, “Why? What evil has he done?” They only shouted the louder, “Crucify him.” So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas to them and, after he had Jesus scourged, handed him over to be crucified. (Mark 15:14-15)*<sup>2</sup>

An innocent man is about to be killed, and the laws of the land will not protect him. A crowd has gathered – not to protest, but to cheer. Government leaders are indifferent, more concerned about politics than justice.

Racism leads to many forms of injustice: sometimes death, sometimes imprisonment, sometimes closed doors and lost opportunities. We may not be in a crowd cheering the evil deed, but are we indifferent? It is easy to remain silent even though we may have an opportunity to speak up. Do we object to an inappropriate “joke”? Do we advocate for justice when we have access to people in power? Do we work to open doors in the workplace? Will we be like Pilate and the crowd, or will we use our opportunities to create opportunities for others?

**ALL:** Christ Jesus, you were a victim of injustice, condemned by those who had the power to save you and ignored by those who might have spoken up on your behalf. Help us to use the opportunities we have to speak out against the injustices around us, knowing that you desire justice for all.

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## SECOND STATION

*Jesus takes up his cross*

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

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

**Leader:** *And carrying the cross himself he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, in Hebrew, Golgotha. (John 19:17)*

Pilate could have taken a different approach. But when Jesus said to Pilate, “Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice,” Pilate replied dismissively, “What is truth?” (John 18:37-38) In that retort, Pilate embodied the attitude that leads to so much discrimination and injustice in every age.

Too often, we do not want to know the truth. We dismiss the daily discrimination faced by people of color – the disparaging looks, the job interviews that never materialize, the apartments that are suddenly no longer available, the lower-quality educational opportunities, the disproportionate police stops, the discriminatory sentencing rates. We would rather think that our society is color-blind and that everyone has an equal chance. We would rather think that discrimination is merely an occasional aberration rather than a daily reality. The truth, however, is that racism is an endemic part of life in our culture.

**ALL:** Jesus, help us to acknowledge the truth with honesty and courage. The injustices caused by racism are far too common and impose heavy crosses on our brothers and sisters. Help us to speak the truth about the magnitude of the injustices they face.

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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/).