

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 Racism¹]

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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NINTH STATION

Jesus falls for the third time

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

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

Leader: *“You impose on people burdens hard to carry, but you yourselves do not lift one finger to touch them. Woe to you!”* (Luke 11:46b-47a)

Jesus is weighed down by the weight of the cross, as though bearing the sins of the whole world.

Racism is a cross most often borne by people of color, but it is not just an individual burden. It has community-wide impacts. Our nation’s social structures and political institutions maintain policies and practices that magnify the sufferings of communities of color. As a result, systemic racism persists.

Tragedies such as the water crisis in Flint, Michigan, usually fall most heavily on minority communities. Toxic waste sites and industrial facilities that pollute the water and air are more likely to be located near communities of color. Low-income people of color are hit hardest by hurricanes like Katrina and Harvey and find it hardest to recover.

Children of color suffer lead poisoning disproportionately. Differences in the distribution of educational resources disadvantage African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans. Our social structures have allowed patterns of systemic racism to persist. We must work to change these patterns.

ALL: Jesus, the call to change social and economic structures that perpetuate racism can be uncomfortable. Help us to acknowledge the roots of racial injustice and work to change them.

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TENTH STATION

Jesus is stripped of his garments

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

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

Leader: *They stripped off his clothes.... (Mt 27:28)*

Part of the humiliation of crucifixion was that the prisoner was stripped naked, left totally exposed. This was done in an attempt to deny the condemned person's dignity.

Racism also attempts to strip others of their dignity. While our human dignity is an indelible gift from God, racist attitudes and actions undermine the human dignity of the oppressor as well as the oppressed.

Our nation's history is tarnished by the enslavement of African Americans, Jim Crow laws, mistreatment of Native Americans, Chinese exclusion laws, Japanese internment camps, and anti-Hispanic discrimination. These patterns of racism flourished in part because "good" people too often remained silent.

If racism flourishes, we are all implicated – especially in a democracy. We are called to transform our society with God's love. Yet our society still allows some to be stripped of their dignity. As members of the Body of Christ, our dignity is intertwined with theirs. How can we not stand humiliated before the cross, knowing that we have failed to adequately protect the dignity of all our brothers and sisters?

ALL: Jesus, in becoming human you ratified the dignity of all humanity. Help us see every person's dignity as important as our own and create social structures that promote dignity for all.

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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.

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² 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.

³ *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/.

⁴ 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.

⁵ *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/.