



Catholic Social Teaching and The Call for Racial Justice

A Resource to Help Form Communities
that Believe, Act and Teach Justice as
True Missionary Disciples of Jesus Christ



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“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. Racism is the sin that says some human beings are inherently superior and others essentially inferior because of races. It is the sin that makes racial characteristics the determining factor for the exercise of human rights. It mocks the words of Jesus: ‘Treat others the way you would have them treat you.’ Indeed, racism is more than a disregard for the words of Jesus; it is a denial of the truth of the dignity of each human being revealed by the mystery of the Incarnation.”
(Brothers and Sisters to Us)



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Dear Catechetical Leaders,

Thank you for taking up the work of sharing Jesus' love for all His children with the people you serve. You are doing so at a critical time in the life of the Church and our country. Our Church, through your efforts, can be a source of healing and reconciliation among people who are fearful and discouraged by the climate of polarization that plagues so many aspects of American society.

We provide this guide so you might know how to use these resources and reflections it contains in the manner best suited to your parish.

Only by combatting racism in all its forms, by teaching tolerance and love for our brothers and sisters and by constant, prayerful, personal transformation can we fulfill our Church's pro-life mission. As Pope Francis has said, "We cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in any form and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life."

Using the teachings of Pope Francis, together we can call the faithful to a fuller understanding of the need for adherence to what he has called "the ethical principles and values inscribed by God in the heart of man."

I am grateful for your commitment and please know that, even as we have entrusted you with this important task, we will pray that Mary, Mother of the Church will inspire and assist you in teaching peace and working for justice.

Sincerely yours in Christ,


Archbishop of Chicago

Land Acknowledgement

This land was and is stewarded by Indigenous people—the traditional land of the Council of Three Fires, the Kickapoo, Peoria, Kaskaskia and Myaamia Peoples.

“The Archdiocese of Chicago is located on the the Anishinawbek or the Council of the Three Fires: the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi Nations. Many other nations such as the Myaamia, Ho-Chunk, Menominee, Sac, and Fox also call this area home.

We acknowledge all Native people who came before us and who continue to contribute within our Archdiocese. We recognize our obligation to respect Tribal sovereignty, defend Native rights and protect and actively promote Native cultural heritage.”

Introduction

The purpose of this comprehensive resource guide is to support parish catechetical leaders and other parish ministers in the Archdiocese of Chicago in forming their staff, volunteers, students and families in the foundational teachings of the Catholic Church which reinforce the call for racial justice. By providing this foundational background for all those in your parish, you will be forming communities that believe, act and teach justice and inclusion from a Catholic lens as true disciples of Jesus Christ.

The framework for this resource guide includes the Archdiocese of Chicago's vision and mission regarding racial justice, USCCB statements on racial justice as well as Catholic Church teaching on social justice as found in the Directory for Catechesis and the Catechism of the Catholic Church. This guide also offers guidance and perspectives on racial justice found in Sacred Scripture, the lives of the saints and through prayer.

Each section of this resource guide includes opportunities for reflection and discussion on the content shared. Parish leaders are encouraged to select and use the resources and reflections within this guide in the manner that is best suited to your specific parish community (sample implementation models will be offered).

The following context is offered to help parish leaders clearly define racism and present the value of Catholic Social Teaching when engaging parishioners in dialogue about racism using the resources in this guide.

What is Racism?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines racism as “Unjust discrimination on the basis of a person’s race; a violation of human dignity and a sin against justice.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, glossary) The USCCB offers a detailed description of this definition of racism in **Open Wide Our Hearts**:

- 1. Racism is unjust discrimination on the basis of a person’s race:** “Racism arises when, either consciously or unconsciously, a person holds that his or her own race or ethnicity is superior, and therefore judges persons of other races or ethnicities as inferior and unworthy of equal regard.” (Open Wide Our Hearts, 3)
- 2. Racism is a sin against justice:** “When this conviction or attitude leads individuals or groups to exclude, ridicule, mistreat, or unjustly discriminate against persons on the basis of their race or ethnicity, it is sinful. Racist acts are sinful because they violate justice.” (Open Wide Our Hearts, 3)
- 3. Racism is a violation of human dignity:** “They [racist acts] reveal a failure to acknowledge the human dignity of the persons offended, to recognize them as the neighbors Christ calls us to love (Mt 22:39).” (Open Wide Our Hearts, 3)

When Does Racism Occur, What Does it Look Like and Where Can it be Found?

- Racism arises when a fundamental truth is ignored: “Racism occurs because a person ignores the fundamental truth that, because all humans share a common origin, they are all brothers and sisters, all equally made in the image of God. When this truth is ignored, the consequence is prejudice and fear of the other, and—all too often—hatred. (Open Wide Our Hearts, 4)
- Racism comes in many forms. It can be seen:
 - In deliberate, sinful acts
 - By groups as well as individuals
 - With symbols of hatred

- In discrimination in hiring, housing, educational opportunities and incarceration
- With racial profiling
- Through fear and harassment of persons
- By rhetoric that instigates fear against foreigners, immigrants and refugees
- In the form of the sin of omission, remaining silent and failing to act against racial injustice (Open Wide Our Hearts, 4)
- “Racism can often be found in our hearts - in many cases placed there unwillingly or unknowingly by our upbringing and culture. As such, it can lead to thoughts and actions that we do not even see as racist, but nonetheless flow from the same prejudicial root.” (Open Wide Our Hearts, 5)
- “Racism can also be institutional, when practices or traditions are upheld that treat certain groups of people unjustly. The cumulative effects of personal sins of racism have led to social structures of injustice and violence that makes us all accomplices in racism.” (Open Wide our Hearts, 5)
- Cardinal Francis George, OMI, raised attention to spatial racism in his pastoral letter *Dwell In My Love* (2002):
 “Spatial racism refers to patterns of metropolitan development in which some affluent whites create racially and economically segregated suburbs or gentrified areas of cities,” which prevents substantial neighborliness in our city and church spaces. The resulting economic inequities for many blacks, Hispanics and some newly arrived immigrants are a form of racism that manifests in many areas of life such as lack of access to affordable housing, decaying infrastructure and insufficient public transit options to travel to job opportunities.

What is Catholic Social Teaching?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines Catholic Social Teaching as “The teaching (social doctrine) of the Church on the truth of revelation about human dignity, human solidarity and the principles of justice and peace; the moral judgments about economic and social matters required by such truth and about the demands of justice and peace.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, glossary)

How Does Catholic Social Teaching Help to Eradicate Racism?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church provides a framework within Catholic Social Teaching which assists us in combating racism in our hearts and in our society since Catholic Social Teaching:

- Emerges from the truth of God’s revelation about:
 - Human dignity, human solidarity and the principles of justice and peace
- Offers moral judgments about:
 - Economic and social matters required by such truth
 - The demands of justice and peace

Since Catholic Social Teaching affirms the inherent dignity of each person, we find within it critical elements for working to end racism which violates human dignity. “The Church’s social teaching proposes principles for reflection; it provides criteria for judgment; it gives guidelines for action.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2423) This catechetical document is anchored in Church Teaching and draws the connection on how Catholic Social Teaching can help individuals to eradicate racism in our personal lives, parish communities and world.

SECTION 1

Archdiocesan Vision and Mission for Racial Justice

As disciples of Christ we live, learn, work, pray and worship in solidarity with all our brothers and sisters where there is distinction without separation, unity without uniformity and difference without division. We are called in solidarity to undo racism in ourselves, our families, our schools and our church, in order to learn, heal and grow together as disciples in God's loving grace.

In a letter to Catholic school educators and parish catechists on May 6, 2021, Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago, encouraged parish and school educators to build up communities centered on peace and justice, and he commended parish and school educators' dedication to opening doors for peaceful dialogue around racial justice in our Catholic communities. Cardinal Cupich stated, "Your leadership allows for mutual sharing with the purpose of initiating reconciliation that has a lasting and profound impact for everyone. This is the core of what faith leadership is about. It is how we bring to life the Gospel values on which our parishes and schools are built."

The cardinal concluded his letter by thanking school educators and parish catechists for their commitment to racial justice, equity and inclusion. Noting "Our Catholic community in Chicago has a long and distinguished history of celebrating the contributions of diverse populations that make up our Church family."

Parish leaders who are looking for resources in addition to this guide or additional support as they work to promote racial justice in their communities are encouraged to reach out to the Archdiocese of Chicago's **Office of Human Dignity and Solidarity**.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

In 2018, the Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) issued the document ***Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love - A Pastoral Letter Against Racism***. This document describes racism as a moral problem that requires a moral remedy, a conversion of the heart, that impels us to act. The power of this type of transformation will be a strong catalyst in eliminating those injustices that impinge on human dignity. As Christians, we know this to be true, for with "God all things are possible" (Mt 19:26). It is the Lord who, by his grace, forgives and restores us to these relationships and heals the wounds between us.

"Racism can often be found in our hearts – in many cases placed there unwillingly or unknowingly by our upbringing and culture. As such, it can lead to thoughts and actions that we do not even see as racist, but nonetheless flow from the same prejudicial root."

"Racism arises when - either consciously or unconsciously - a person holds that his or her own race or ethnicity is superior, and therefore judges persons of other races or ethnicities as inferior and unworthy of equal regard. When this conviction or attitude leads individuals or groups to exclude, ridicule, mistreat, or unjustly discriminate against persons on the basis of their race or ethnicity, it is sinful. Racist acts are sinful because they violate justice. They reveal a failure to acknowledge the human dignity of the persons offended, to recognize them as the neighbors Christ calls us to love (Mt 22:39)."

The U.S. Catholic Bishops' 1979 Pastoral Letter on Racism, **Brothers and Sisters to Us** explores the reality of racism that has long endured in our society and in our Church. Using this pastoral letter "to call attention to the persistent presence of racism" in our society, the bishops address the sin of racism and the necessity of looking to Christ to overcome it.

"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. Racism is the sin that says some human beings are inherently superior and others essentially inferior because of races. It is the sin that makes racial characteristics the determining factor for the exercise of human rights. It mocks the words of Jesus: "Treat others the way you would have them treat you." Indeed, racism is more than a disregard for the words of Jesus; it is a denial of the truth of the dignity of each human being revealed by the mystery of the Incarnation."

"In order to find the strength to overcome the evil of racism, we must look to Christ. In Christ Jesus "there does not exist among you Jew or Greek, slave or freedom, male or female. All are one in Christ Jesus." As Pope John Paul II has said so clearly, "Our spirit is set in one direction, the only direction for our intellect, will and heart is -- toward Christ our Redeemer, toward Christ the Redeemer of [humanity.]" It is in Christ, then, that the Church finds the central cause for its commitment to justice, and to the struggle for the human rights and dignity of all persons."

"The sin [of racism] is social in nature in that each of us, in varying degrees, is responsible. All of us in some measure are accomplices. As our recent pastoral letter on moral values states: "The absence of personal fault for an evil does not absolve one of all responsibility. We must seek to resist and undo injustices we have not ceased, lest we become bystanders who tacitly endorse evil and so share in guilt in it.'"

We encourage parish staffs and ministry volunteers to spend time reading the USCCB's 1979 pastoral letter on racism, *Brothers and Sisters to Us*, as well as their 2018 pastoral letter against racism, *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love*. The USCCB's **Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism** website explains why they have written *Open Wide Our Hearts* at this time: "But racism still profoundly affects our culture, and it has no place in the Christian heart. This evil causes great harm to its victims, and it corrupts the souls of those who harbor racist or prejudicial thoughts. The persistence of the evil of racism is why we are writing this letter now."

To assist individuals and parish leaders in examining the persistence of the evil of racism through the study and reflection of this pastoral letter, a study guide is **provided here**. Additionally, parish leaders are encouraged to place **this information** about *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love* in their parish bulletins.

For additional parish racial justice resources from the USCCB, including statements, videos, articles and educational resources for all ages, visit the USCCB's **Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism** website which "seeks to teach about and to witness to the intrinsic dignity of the human person as an antidote to the grave sin of racism."

While acknowledging that "Diversity is a fact, a growing reality, in the United States and in virtually all areas of the globe," the USCCB **Committee for Cultural Diversity in the Church** shares additional resources including **Learning Modules on Intercultural Competencies** and the **One Church, Many Cultures Newsletter**.

Recent Vatican Documents

In 2004, The Vatican's Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace prepared the **Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church** which presents a systematic overview of the fundamental framework of Catholic social teaching including citations of Magisterial texts taken from council documents, encyclicals, papal addresses and documents drafted by offices of the Holy See. "The document is presented as an instrument for the moral and pastoral discernment of the complex events that mark our time; as a guide to inspire, at the individual and collective levels, attitudes and choices that will permit all people to look to the future with greater trust and hope; as an aid for the faithful concerning the Church's teaching in the area of social morality" (10).

The Compendium provides the information needed to address the social issues of our day from a Catholic, Christ-centered lens which will ensure that dialogue remains focused on the dignity and good of all persons. "The exposition of the Church's social doctrine is meant to suggest a systematic approach for finding solutions to problems, so that discernment, judgment and decisions will correspond to reality, and so that solidarity and hope will have a greater impact on the complexities of current situations" (9).

Part 1 of the Compendium presents context related to the foundation of the Church's Social Doctrine which is centered on the fact that "Every person is created by God, loved and saved in Jesus Christ, and fulfills himself by creating a network of multiple relationships of love, justice and solidarity with other persons while he goes about his various activities in the world" (35).

From this primary understanding, the Compendium explains that "The whole of the Church's social doctrine, in fact, develops from the principle that affirms the inviolable dignity of the human person. In her manifold expressions of this knowledge, the Church has striven above all to defend human dignity in the face of every attempt to redimension or distort its image; moreover she has often denounced the many violations of human dignity. History attests that it is from the fabric of social relationships that there arise some of the best possibilities for ennobling the human person, but it is also there that lie in wait the most loathsome rejections of human dignity" (107).

Providing a key to combating the sin of racism, the Compendium states, "A just society can become a reality only when it is based on the respect of the transcendent dignity of the human person...It is necessary to "consider every neighbor without exception as another self, taking into account first of all his life and the means necessary for living it with dignity" (132). "Together with equality in the recognition of the dignity of each person and of every people there must also be an awareness that it will be possible to safeguard and promote human dignity only if this is done as a community, by the whole of humanity. Only through the mutual action of individuals and peoples sincerely concerned for the good of all men and women can a genuine universal brotherhood be attained; otherwise, the persistence of conditions of serious disparity and inequality will make us all poorer" (145).

In 1998, The Vatican's Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace created the document, **The Church and Racism: Towards a More Fraternal Society** which outlines racist behaviors in the course of history, beginning with Biblical times; current forms of racism; the dignity of every race; and contributions of Christians to the promotion of fraternity and solidarity.

The Church and Racism examines the phenomenon of racism, including manifestations such as intolerance and prejudices which contain racist elements. While examining racism in this manner, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace clearly states, the doctrine of the Catholic Church upholds that “All racist doctrine is contrary to Christian faith and love...Respect for every man, for every race, is respect for fundamental rights, dignity, basic equality. It is certainly not a question of ignoring cultural differences. Rather, it is important to educate to appreciate in a positive way the complementary diversity among peoples. A well-understood pluralism solves the problem of closed racism” (33).

Reflection and Discussion

The Archdiocese of Chicago, the USCCB and the Vatican assert that racism is a persistent evil that affects our culture which we must counteract by working to build up Catholic communities of peace and justice. After reviewing the information and statements from the Archdiocese of Chicago, the USCCB and the Vatican, spend time either by yourself, or with a group, reflecting on (or discussing) the following questions related to the call to combat the evil of racism.

Question	Response
Consider the ways in which you live, work, pray and worship in solidarity with others. As you ponder your actions, have you experienced challenges to living as a disciple of Christ in your interactions with others?	
How have you grown in solidarity with others who are not like you? Are there steps you can take to undo racism in yourself, your family, your community or in the world?	
How do you define racism? Do you see it as a moral problem that requires a moral remedy, a transformation of the heart, that impels us to act?	
Have you ever experienced discrimination because of your race or skin color or ethnic background? What was your response? How has this unfortunate experience helped you to understand the plight of others?	
What injustices on human dignity do you see in your immediate community and in the wider world? Consider ways that you can combat the sin of racism by witnessing to others (by word and action) about the intrinsic dignity of the human person.	
How and where is diversity to be found in your parish or community? Is there a committee of the Parish Council that explores or leads with this?	
Recognizing that racism is a sin and that all racist doctrine is contrary to Christian faith and love, what steps can you take to eradicate and heal the sin of racism in your heart and in your community? What steps can you take to educate yourself (or others) to appreciate the complementary diversity among peoples?	

SECTION 2

Catholic Social Teaching on Social Justice

The USCCB **Office of Justice, Peace and Human Development** reminds us that “Catholic social teaching is based on and inseparable from our understanding of human life and human dignity. Every human being is created in the image of God and redeemed by Jesus Christ and therefore is invaluable and worthy of respect as a member of the human family. Every person, from the moment of conception to natural death, has inherent dignity and a right to life consistent with that dignity. Human dignity comes from God, not from any human quality or accomplishment” (**Catholic Social Teaching**).

Catholic Social Teaching is a gift that affirms equal human dignity for all peoples. Racism, on the other hand, runs counter to principles of Catholic Social Teaching. By reflecting on the social justice themes of respect for the human person, equality and differences among men, and human solidarity, we begin to see more clearly how racial justice is connected to the social doctrine of the Church. The following sections offer brief reflections on the three over-arching themes of Social Justice as outlined in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (**§1928 - §1948**):

1. Respect for the Human Person
2. Equality and Differences Among Men
3. Human Solidarity

The following quotes for deeper understanding and reflection of each these key themes of Social Justice are centered on Catholic teaching found in these sources:

1. The Catechism of the Catholic Church
2. The Directory for Catechesis
3. The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy
4. The Ten Commandments

Catechism of the Catholic Church

Respect for the Human Person (CCC 1929-1933)

“Respect for the human person proceeds by way of respect for the principle that ‘everyone should look upon his neighbor (without exception) as ‘another self,’ above all bearing in mind his life and the means necessary for living it with dignity” (CCC 1931).

“Freedom is exercised in relationships between human beings. Every human person, created in the image and likeness of God, has the natural right to be recognized as a free and responsible being. All owe to each other this duty of respect” (CCC 1738).

Equality and Differences Among Men (CCC 1934-1938)

“Created in the image of the one God and equally endowed with rational souls, all men have the same nature and the same origin. Redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ, all are called to participate in the same divine beatitude: all therefore enjoy an equal dignity” (CCC 1934).

“The equality of men rests essentially on their dignity as persons and the rights that flow from it: Every form of social or cultural discrimination in fundamental personal rights on the grounds of sex, race, color, social conditions, language, or religion must be curbed and eradicated as incompatible with God’s design” (CCC 1935).

Human Solidarity (CCC 1939-1942)

“The principle of solidarity, also articulated in terms of ‘friendship’ or ‘social charity,’ is a direct demand of human and Christian brotherhood. An error, today abundantly widespread, is disregard for the law of human solidarity and charity, dictated and imposed both by our common origin and by the equality in rational nature of all men, whatever nation they belong to. This law is sealed by the sacrifice of redemption offered by Jesus Christ on the altar of the Cross to his heavenly Father, on behalf of sinful humanity” (CCC 1939).

“Jesus makes charity the new commandment. By loving his own ‘to the end,’ he makes manifest the Father’s love which he receives. By loving one another, the disciples imitate the love of Jesus which they themselves receive. Whence Jesus says: ‘As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love.’ And again: ‘This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you’” (CCC 1823).

“Without the help of grace, men would not know how ‘to discern the often narrow path between the cowardice which gives in to evil, and the violence which under the illusion of fighting evil only makes it worse.’ This is the path of charity, that is, of the love of God and of neighbor. Charity is the greatest social commandment. It respects others and their rights. It requires the practice of justice, and it alone makes us capable of it. Charity inspires a life of self-giving: ‘Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it’” (CCC 1889).

We encourage parish staffs and ministry volunteers to spend time reflecting on the **Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching**, particularly those themes which correlate to the Catechism’s main themes of Social Justice: Respect for the Human Person, Equality and Differences Among Men and Human Solidarity. This **Examination of Conscience** will help individuals to contemplate their thoughts and behavior in light of Catholic Social Teaching, and this **Examination of Conscience** will help individuals to contemplate their thoughts and actions in light of the sin of racism. Parish leaders are encouraged to offer time for the sacrament of penance when sharing these Examination of Conscience guides with parishioners.

Directory for Catechesis

Respect for the Human Person

“Every person, created in the image and likeness of God, is unique and has an intrinsic and inalienable dignity. This finds its foundation in revealed truth, which brings forth those principles which are written in human nature as a perennial and universal recognition of the imprint of God the creator” (379).

“In her mission of promoting human life always and everywhere and of defending it when it is threatened, the Church clearly affirms that the life of the person is sacred and inviolable.... The challenge over respect for the dignity and integrity of the person remains, therefore, a relevant scenario for the proclamation of God’s merciful love in the contemporary world” (380).

Equality and Differences Among Men

“In Jesus’s proclamation of the kingdom of God, the privileged recipients are the poor. He declares that the poor are blessed, thus teaching that serving and welcoming every person in a situation of poverty means recognizing that Jesus himself is present, so much so as to be able to identify him with them: ‘you did it to me.’ Jesus thus demonstrates a powerful bond between the contemplation of God and the personal relationship with those who are wounded and rejected, calling his disciples not only to serve the poor but to discover him really present in them, and through them to encounter the Father” (386).

“Catechesis allows itself to be challenged by poverty, seeing that this is intrinsic to the evangelical message. Because it recognizes its value and, in view of an integral formation of Christians, its role is to educate believers for evangelical poverty and a sober way of life. Moreover, it is to encourage certain basic attitudes in the faithful: respect for the dignity of the person, support for his growth, promotion of the culture of fraternity, indignation over situations of misery and injustice” (388).

Human Solidarity

“The Church, highlighting the intimate connection between evangelization and integral human development, reiterates that the faith must not be lived as an individual reality, devoid of concrete consequences for social life. ‘An authentic faith – which is never comfortable or completely personal – always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it.’ An integral part of the journey of exploration of the faith is the development of social and political vision attentive to the elimination of injustices, to the building up of peace and the safeguarding of creation, to the promotion of various forms of solidarity and subsidiarity” (389).

“Catechesis, with the help of the Church’s social doctrine and by adapting its proposals to individual conditions, enables an evangelical view of reality that makes one aware of the existence of structures of sin that have a negative impact on the social fabric and on the environment. It also motivates the faithful to work for the common good, both in the sphere of their own everyday lives and, on a wider scale, in more direct social and political engagement” (390).

“Catechesis makes the proclamation of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ continually resound in the heart of every person, so that life may be transformed. A dynamic and complex reality at the service of the Word of God, catechesis is accompaniment, education, and formation in the faith and for the faith, an introduction to the celebration of the Mystery, illumination and interpretation of human life and history. By harmoniously integrating these characteristics, catechesis expresses the richness of its essence and offers its specific contribution to the pastoral mission of the Church” (55).

For deeper engagement with the **Directory for Catechesis**, the **Leader’s Guide to the Directory for Catechesis** and the corresponding **Participant Manual** provide suggestions for integrating the kerygma into all parish evangelization and catechetical efforts, including those related to contemporary cultural conditions.

The CST 101 video series presented by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services includes videos that bring the themes of Catholic social teaching, including **Solidarity, Life and Dignity of the Human Person**, to life and inspire us to put our faith into action.

Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy

Respect for the Human Person

The Corporal Works of Mercy are charitable actions we can perform that extend God's compassion and mercy toward others. First and foremost, they recognize the sacredness of human life and promote respect for the human person. For something to truly be a work of mercy, it must be done out of love for our neighbor because of our love for God first and foremost. Thus, God is to be the cornerstone of all charitable actions we perform to help alleviate the suffering of others.

Equality and Differences Among Men

The Spiritual Works of Mercy are acts of compassion by which we help others with their emotional and spiritual needs. The spiritual works of mercy recognize sin, ignorance, doubt, sorrow and other human conditions that keep us from recognizing these conditions in others, perhaps due to experiences of racism, we are called to reach out in faith and love so that we might draw them closer to Christ.

Human Solidarity

Conformed to Christ through the Holy Spirit, Christians are called to live up to the gift of mercy they have received from God by serving their brothers and sisters – especially through the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. By performing acts of social charity with a firm determination to commit oneself to the common good, we become apostles of the Father's goodness, working to heal both the physical and spiritual wounds that have been caused by the sin of racism.

We encourage parish leaders to share information about the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy with their parishioners. These PDFs of **The Corporal Works of Mercy** and **The Spiritual Works of Mercy** can be printed as large posters to display in parish gathering spaces to remind parishioners of the charitable actions we can perform that extend God's compassion and mercy to others which helps us to honor each person's inherent human dignity and combat racism.

Additionally, the posters of **God is Rich in Mercy** and **Living a Merciful Life** will help members of your parish community to personally understand that God's mercy, as illustrated throughout Scripture, extends to them, and encourages them to become apostles of the Father's goodness by respecting the human person, honoring the equality and difference among men, and living in solidarity with other.

The Ten Commandments

Respect for the Human Person

“The Ten Commandments, which constitute an extraordinary path of life and indicate the surest way for living in freedom from slavery to sin, contain a privileged expression of the natural law. They “teach us the true humanity of man. They bring to light the essential duties, and therefore, indirectly, the fundamental rights inherent in the nature of the human person.” (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church)

The Fifth Commandment: You Shall Not Kill - “Every human life, from the moment of conception until death, is sacred because the human person has been willed for its own sake in the image and likeness of the living and holy God.” (CCC 2319)

Equality and Differences Among Men

“There comes from the Decalogue a commitment that concerns not only fidelity to the one true God, but also the social relations among the people of the Covenant. All of this applies also to strangers: The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself.” (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church)

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the prophets” (Mt 22:37-40).

Human Solidarity

“The gift of freedom and the Promised Land, and the gift of the Covenant on Sinai and the Ten Commandments are therefore intimately linked to the practices which must regulate, in justice and solidarity, the development of Israelite society.” (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church)

The Fifth Commandment: You Shall Not Kill - “Deliberate hatred is contrary to charity. Hatred of the neighbor is a sin when one deliberately wishes him evil. Hatred of the neighbor is a grave sin when one deliberately desires him grave harm” (CCC 2303).

We encourage further study and reflection on the Ten Commandments as they relate to themes of Catholic Social Justice with **Protecting Human Dignity: The Ten Commandments**, an article from the USCCB that explores the link between the Ten Commandments and protecting human dignity.

This brief video from Bishop Barron provides a clear presentation which encourages an awareness of the Ten Commandments as the foundation of the moral and spiritual life.

Bishop Barron reiterates that God is the Lord and giver of life, and that we may never take upon ourselves the killing of another. Since all life belongs to God, we are reminded that any act of racism against another is a deliberate violation of God's commandments.

Reflection and Discussion

The Catholic Church teaches that “Social justice can be obtained only in respecting the transcendent dignity of man” (CCC 1929). As you reflect on the teachings and guidance found within the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the Directory for Catechesis, the Works of Mercy and the Ten Commandments, pause to consider the themes of respect for the human person, equality and differences among men and human solidarity. Then spend time either by yourself, or with a group, reflecting on (or discussing) the following questions.

Question	Response
<p>What forms of social or cultural discrimination in fundamental personal rights have you witnessed or experienced yourself? What forms have you noticed are being curbed and eradicated?</p>	
<p>How and where have you discussed racism in the context of the Catholic Church? Where have you recognized the help of God's grace in effective efforts to combat racism?</p>	
<p>Consider a time when you were able to proclaim God's merciful love amid difficulties in the contemporary world. Where did you find the courage to make this bold proclamation?</p>	
<p>Consider a time when you failed to respect and honor another person's dignity through a thought or an act of prejudice, fear or hatred. How might your recognition of that occurrence of racism move you to act in a manner that is attentive to the elimination of injustices and the building up of peace?</p>	
<p>Think of someone you know who lives the mission of always promoting and defending human life when it is threatened, particularly by racism. In what way do they inspire you to do the same?</p>	
<p>Where have you witnessed or personally encountered the sin of racism causing situations of hunger, thirst, nakedness, homelessness, illness, imprisonment or death? In what ways can you live the Corporal Works of Mercy to combat racism?</p>	
<p>Where have you witnessed or personally encountered the sin of racism causing situations of doubt, ignorance, the need to admonish, sorrow, lack of forgiveness, impatience or hopelessness? In what ways can you live the Spiritual Works of Mercy to combat these consequences of racism?</p>	
<p>Consider some of the ways that you have witnessed one's love of God leading to love of a neighbor. How might you emulate that in your life, and how can you draw courage from that experience to combat the sin of racism?</p>	

Question	Response
In what ways have the Ten Commandments guided you in making choices that help you to live without discrimination and prejudice?	

SECTION 3

Sacred Scripture, Saints and Prayer

In addition to the depth and multitude of teachings of the Catholic Magisterium and Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the tradition of the saints offer valuable insights into framing how we think, pray and act as individuals and communities of faith who are committed to racial justice.

Pray with Sacred Scripture using Lectio Divina

Sacred Scripture provides a sure guide for reflection on racial justice that is centered on the timeless teachings of Jesus Christ rather than on current popular views. As such, it offers clear examples and guidance for opening ourselves up to living as disciples of Christ who demonstrate God’s love for every person.

These Scripture verses will help individuals and groups to reflectively listen to God, meditate on what God may be stirring in their hearts, respond to God in prayer and contemplate the ways in which God is acting interiorly in their lives. To further prompt a spirit of reflection on one’s beliefs and actions in relation to racial justice, we encourage praying with Scripture with the process of Lectio Divina. This method of prayer will provide a pathway for deeper reflection on the type of Christian living and witness that God is calling us all to.

Lectio Divina is a common method of “sacred reading” which helps to guide one’s thoughts and responses to God’s Holy Word revealed in a specific scripture passage. The short videos, **Lectio Divina** and **What Is Lectio Divina?**, will help individuals and parish leaders to gain a better understanding of this method of prayerful reflection. Additionally, **The Steps of Lectio Divina** is a helpful guide to use for extending the amount of time for prayer and Scriptural reflection during parish events and meetings.

Saints and Witnesses

Numerous Catholic saints have taken bold risks while working for racial justice. Their dedication as living witnesses of God’s love for all people are examples to us of the hardships that many have endured not only because of racism but in the fight against racism. Some examples of those who challenged racism in their time include: St. Katharine Drexel, St. Josephine Bakhita, St. Martin de Porres, St. Oscar Romero and Ven. Augustus Tolton, among others. The stories of these saints and witnesses offer another avenue of inspiration for your parish groups as you envision a way forward that is dedicated to honoring the human dignity of all people. Let **these saints and witnesses** become patrons of your parish efforts and meetings that are focused on racial justice.

Prayers

In addition to Lectio Divina (detailed above), the Catholic faith has an abundance of methods of prayer that help the faithful grow in relationship with God and one another. We offer a few recommendations of some prayer methods as well as the text of prayers that will help you to begin and end your meetings for racial justice with a spirit of prayer and reflection. These brief **prayers for peace and unity** can be easily included in any meetings or events that you plan for your parish communities. The following traditional devotions, reflections and prayer services can also be used during regular parish meetings about racial justice as well as for longer parish prayer events.

Traditional prayers such as the Holy Rosary and the Stations of the Cross help us to recall events from Christ's Passion. Meditating on Christ's pain and suffering is a fitting way to pray for an end to racism, and contemplation of Christ's suffering and love for all mankind calls us to conversion of heart and compels us to change how we live our lives.

The Holy Rosary

- **The Sorrowful Mystery of Racism**
- **Rosary Across the Diocese Sorrowful Mysteries**

Stations of the Cross

- **Stations of the Cross for Overcoming Racism**

Scripture Reflections and Prayers

- **Scripture Reflection on Unity in the Body of Christ**
- **Prayer Service for the Elimination of Racism**
- **Novena for Racial Justice**

Reflection and Discussion

Sacred Scripture teaches us, saints inspire us and prayer stirs us to reflect on racial justice from a Christ-centered perspective which helps us to see each person as known and loved by God, leading to peace and unity within our communities and beyond. After reviewing the previous section with scripture verses, saint reflections and prayers, spend time either by yourself, or with a group, reflecting on (or discussing) the following questions.

Question	Response
In what ways have you been able to live Jesus' commandment to "Love your neighbor as yourself?" What challenges do you encounter as you try to follow Jesus' instruction?	

Question	Response
When have you seen the Lord hungry, thirsty, as a stranger, naked or in-prison, and taken care of him? Do you struggle to recognize Jesus in “the least brothers of his?”	
What is your reaction to the verse “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ but hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.”	
In what ways does a particular saint, or saints, inspire you to take bold risks while working for racial justice?	
Describe your spiritual friendship or devotion to a saint who encourages you as a living witness of God’s love for all people.	
Share an experience in which you may have endured a hardship either because of racism or in the fight against racism.	

Conclusion

With this resource guide in hand as a starting point for parish efforts of addressing the sin of racism through formation in the foundational teachings of the Catholic Church, we encourage parish leaders to envision next steps that individuals, groups and the parish at large will take. While this resource may be adapted for use during any parish meeting schedule (e.g., seasonally, monthly, bi-weekly, weekly, etc.), we suggest you consider a schedule that will meet the needs of your parish community.

These **Parish Implementation Suggestions** offer some sample timeframes for using the content of this resource guide to form staff, volunteers and parishioners through various meeting structures. The sample timeframes illustrate how to pull from sections of this document for brief presentations, reflection and discussions on the topics that may be particularly relevant for your parish community. By selecting the content that is relevant for your community, we pray that you will be successful in forming communities that believe, act and teach justice and inclusion from a Catholic lens as true disciples of Jesus Christ.

“Racism is a moral problem that requires a moral remedy—a transformation of the human heart—that impels us to act. The power of this type of transformation will be a strong catalyst in eliminating those injustices that impinge on human dignity. As Christians, we know this to be true, for with “God all things are possible” (Mt 19:26).” (Open Wide Our Hearts, 20)