



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

Parish Implementation Suggestions



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“We ask [all the faithful] to fight the evil of racism by educating themselves, reflecting on their personal thoughts and actions, listening to the experience of those who have been affected by racism, and by developing and supporting programs that help repair the damages caused by racial discrimination.” (Open Wide Our Hearts, 27)

Introduction

Taking the first steps to address racial justice is not always easy, as it is a sensitive topic for many people. The **Catholic Social Teaching and The Call for Racial Justice Resource Guide** was written to provide a framework for helping parish leaders guide parishioners, ministry staff and volunteers in understanding and discussing the topic of racial justice from a properly formed Catholic lens. Leading meetings and group discussions from this viewpoint will help participants enter into a mindset of prayer and reflection that is open to active listening, meaningful discussion, mutual respect and building community.

The Catholic Social Teaching and The Call for Racial Justice Resource Guide includes three main sections for grounding presentations and discussions in a Christ-centered approach that highlights God's love for every person:

1. Statements from the Local and Universal Catholic Church
 - a. The Archdiocese of Chicago Vision and Mission for Racial Justice
 - b. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
 - c. Recent Vatican Documents
2. Catholic Teaching on Social Justice
 - a. Respect for the Human Person
 - b. Equality and Differences Among Men
 - c. Human Solidarity
3. Catholic Tradition and Prayer
 - a. Sacred Scripture
 - b. Saints and Witnesses
 - c. Prayers

The Catholic Social Teaching and The Call for Racial Justice Resource Guide also includes several reflection questions for the content presented in each of the three main sections of the document. **These reflection questions** may be used for personal reflection and/or group discussion.

Parish leaders are encouraged to select and use the resources and reflections within the Catholic Social Teaching and The Call for Racial Justice Resource Guide in the manner that is best suited to their specific parish community. For example, one parish may desire to take an in-depth look at the resources and information from the USCCB through a 4-week study, whereas focusing on the lives of saints who worked against the sin of racism through a monthly series of presentations may be a more fruitful approach for another parish community.

Parish Implementation

The primary audience for the materials found in the Catholic Social Teaching and The Call for Racial Justice Resource Guide is adults. We recommend that parish leaders invite catechists, parents, other ministry leaders, parish volunteers or all adult parishioners to participate in meetings and discussions about racial justice. Hosting meetings for specific groups in your parish (e.g., volunteers, parents, young adults) will help to build smaller communities where deeper conversations may be more likely.

We recommend that as you look through these materials, you take time to reflect on the needs of your parish community in the present moment. Consider which topic people will be open to and what they will most likely respond to. Exploring these various resources in stages will help you to continually form your community as disciples of Christ who are willing to work to end racism.

Addressing the sin of racism can be a difficult topic for many individuals and communities. It is important to remember that addressing racism is an ongoing effort that must have as its focus the building of a community of disciples of Christ who follow the commandment to “love one another.” To ensure that focus, prayer should be given priority of place in all efforts and events related to eradicating racism. As you help individuals and your community move through discomfort to examination and reconciliation, you will begin to effect real change in people’s lives, helping them to live Christ-centered lives.

Life Giving Dialogue

In *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis encourages authentic dialogue as he shares some tips that can be utilized for meaningful dialogue when engaging in conversations related to the sin of racism and the call for racial justice. Pope Francis encourages all to “develop certain attitudes that express love and encourage authentic dialogue” which he outlines in his post-synodal apostolic exhortation (no. 136-141). These attitudes for authentic dialogue include:

- "Being ready to listen patiently and attentively to everything the other person wants to say." (no. 137)
- “Develop the habit of giving real importance to the other person,” and “appreciating them and recognizing their right to exist, to think as they do and to be happy.” (no. 138)
- “Keep an open mind. Don’t get bogged down in your own limited ideas and opinions, but be prepared to change or expand them.” (no. 139)
- “Show affection and concern for the other person.” (no. 140)
- “For a worthwhile dialogue we have to have something to say. This can only be the fruit of an interior richness nourished by reading, personal reflection, prayer and openness to the world around us.” (no. 141)

To reinforce Pope Francis’ recommendations for authentic dialogue, we recommend that you provide a copy of **this document** to group participants to help them to be mindful of “best practices for dialogue that leads to conversion and action.” This guide to life giving dialogue was created by The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington, and is one page of a larger document entitled *Made in God’s Image* which can be found in its entirety in the Further Formation and Study section of this guide.

Practical Recommendations

Step 1 | Know Your Audience

- Pastoral staff – entire staffs should spend time reviewing the guide and resources together and then work to see where the parish community is struggling in terms of racial justice and make a plan to address those specific needs. Consider forming a group of volunteers to serve as a committee that will assist the pastoral staff with implementing plans to meet the needs of the parish related to racial justice.
- Parish ministry volunteers – offer a good amount of in-depth information from these resources to help ministry volunteers assess how they personally think and act in terms of racial justice, increase their knowledge of what the Church teaches about social justice, and develop strategies to inspire and inform others through ministry.
- Parents – create a comfortable atmosphere for conversation, start with simple resources that offer inspiration such as saint stories and Scripture verses. Provide resources that create connections with everyday experiences, and offer action steps.

Step 2 | Select Resource(s)/Topic(s)

- There are three main sections of the resource guide, and the strategy for sharing this information will vary at every parish. A few examples include:
 - The pastoral staff takes one year to slowly review the content of sections 1 and 2 while including the Scripture, witnesses and prayers for the opening and closing of every meeting.
 - Provide inspiration for parishioners by offering a Saints and Witnesses monthly series as a way to introduce the community to holy men and women who lived in ways that honored the human dignity of all people, include videos of the saints if possible, along with reflection and small-group discussion questions. After that series, offer a Catholic Teaching on Social Justice monthly series in which you walk through the quotes and reflection questions in section 2.
 - Offer a deep-dive series into Open Wide Our Hearts, utilizing the study guide found in section 1, the Action Steps to Eradicate Racism and the bulletin inserts and webinar found in the Recommended Parish Next Steps and Further Study section of this document.

Step 3 | Schedule and Plan Your Meeting(s)/Event(s)

- Seasonal events, 4-6 week series or monthly events are possible options for scheduling
- Prioritize prayer and personal examination in every meeting or event
- Include time for personal reflection as well as small-group discussion
- Introduce audio or video options in each meeting to meet differing learning styles

Step 4 | Publicize, Promote, Share Introductory Materials

- Publicize and promote through all of your parish channels of communication
- Provide a clear description so attendees know what to expect and will not be caught off guard by what may be an uncomfortable topic for some
- For groups that are taking a deep-dive into the USCCB and Vatican documents, provide links for materials prior to the meeting/event

Step 5 | Host Meeting/Event

- Create an comfortable atmosphere of hospitality and welcoming
- Review the 10 recommendations for Life Giving Dialogue
- Encourage personal testimonies to help build community and foster relationships
- Be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit

Step 6 | Evaluate and Plan Next Steps

- Always have a clear follow-up plan outlined for each meeting/event
- Create personal and parish community post-meeting action steps to overcome racism
- Adjust any plans to meet the needs of the community that surface during gatherings

The Catholic Social Teaching and The Call for Racial Justice Resource Guide may be adapted for any parish schedule (e.g., seasonally, monthly, bi-weekly, weekly, etc.). The following timeframe samples of a single longer meeting and a series of meetings may help parish leaders envision a schedule of meetings/events that works for their community. We encourage parish leaders to use these samples to help plan meetings that meet the needs of their specific community.

Timeframe for a Two-Hour Facilitated Discussion

Meeting Themes/Topics	Approximate Time
Welcome Provide handouts and any instructions, as needed	10 minutes
Opening Prayer Selected from the resource guide section on Sacred Scripture and prayer	10 minutes
Introduce Topic 1 Selected from any section of the resource guide	10 minutes
Reflection and Discussion	15 minutes*
Introduce Topic 2 Selected from any section of the resource guide	10 minutes
Reflection and Discussion	15 minutes*
Introduce Topic 3 Selected from any section of the resource guide	10 minutes
Reflection and Discussion	15 minutes*
Action Steps Discuss next steps that individuals and the group will take	10 minutes
Closing Prayer with Lectio Divina Selected from the resource guide section on Sacred Scripture and prayer	15 minutes

*Extended times of reflection and discussion may be needed to allow for meaningful discussion and community-building.

Sample Meeting Agendas and Schedule for a Series of Facilitated Discussions

MEETING 1 | AGENDA

1. Welcome and Prayer
2. Introduce and briefly present the section on the Archdiocesan Vision and Mission for Racial Justice
3. Introduce and briefly present the section on statements and documents from the USCCB and the Vatican
 - a. Including **Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love**
4. Reflection and Discussion
 - a. Divide into small groups to discuss the reflection questions related to the above topics
 - b. Ask small groups to share highlights of their discussions with the larger group
5. Closing Prayer
6. Homework: Read **Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love**

MEETING 2 | AGENDA

1. Welcome and Prayer
2. Briefly review meeting 1 topics and homework assignment
3. Introduce and briefly present the section for Catholic Teaching on Social Justice
4. Reflection and Discussion
 - a. Divide into small groups to discuss the reflection questions related to the above topics
 - b. Ask small groups to share highlights of their discussions with the larger group
5. Closing Prayer
6. Homework: Read the Catechism of the Catholic Church **§1928 - §1948**. Prayerfully reflect on the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy

MEETING 3 | AGENDA

1. Welcome and Prayer
2. Briefly review meeting 2 topics and homework assignment
3. Introduce and briefly present the section Sacred Scripture, Saints and Prayer
4. Reflection and Discussion
 - a. Divide into small groups to discuss the reflection questions related to the above topics
 - b. Ask small groups to share highlights of their discussions with the larger group
5. Discuss potential next steps that individuals or the parish group are feeling called to take
6. Closing Prayer
7. Homework: Use Lectio Divina to pray with a selected **Scripture passage**. Learn more about and strive to imitate a saint who worked to eradicate the sin of racism

SAMPLE TIMEFRAME FOR EACH MEETING

Meeting Agenda Items	Approximate Time
Welcome Provide handouts and any instructions, as needed	10 minutes
Opening Prayer Selected from the resource guide section on Sacred Scripture and prayer	10 minutes
Brief Introduction or Review Review may be needed for ongoing group meetings to help participants process information or to discuss homework assignments	15 minutes
Main Topic Presentation Selected from any section of the resource guide	15 minutes
Reflection and Discussion	15 minutes*
Action Steps Discuss next steps that individuals and the group will take, including homework assignment if applicable	10 minutes
Closing Prayer with Lectio Divina Selected from the resource guide section on Sacred Scripture and prayer	15 minutes

*Extended times of reflection and discussion may be needed to allow for meaningful discussion and community-building.

Recommended Parish Next Steps and Further Study

The Catholic Social Teaching and The Call for Racial Justice Resource Guide is a starting point for parish efforts at addressing the sin of racism, and we encourage parish leaders to envision next steps that individuals, groups and the parish at large will take. The content and resources in the guide can be extended even further than what has been illustrated in the above sample meeting agendas and timeframes. We offer the following recommendations to help brainstorm what direction a parish may like to go as they move forward in efforts for racial justice.

1. Create a parish strategic plan for regular formation efforts according to the needs of your community
 - a. Inspire your parish's plan with these **Action Steps to Eradicate Racism**
2. Utilize the **Catholic Social Teaching and The Call for Racial Justice Resource Guide**
 - a. Determine which resources are most beneficial for your parish community and plan ways to explore the content and topics with parish groups
 - b. Share information with faith formation catechists through a series of group meetings, discussions and gatherings for prayer
3. Host regularly scheduled parish events to pray and work for an end to racism
 - a. Examples: Masses, monthly rosaries, devotions to the Blessed Mother or specific saints, service events, discussion groups, etc.

FOR FURTHER FORMATION AND STUDY

1. In the video **What Can Catholics Do to Overcome Racism**, Fr. Pierre Toussaint, CFR shares his experience of racism and prejudice in the Church, as he talks to Fr. Mark-Mary about Catholic Social Teaching. This free 17 minute video is available from Ascension Presents.
2. Read **Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love** as a group and use **this study guide** for deeper conversations. Place **this information** about Open Wide Our Hearts in parish bulletins. Watch **this webinar** about Open Wide our Hearts to examine pastoral responses to racism in light of the Catholic faith.
3. Read the 2016 We Are Salt and Light blog post, **The Sluggish Pursuit of Racial Justice**, by Bishop Joseph Perry, Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago. Then invite conversation around significant takeaways or questions that participants have after reading.
4. Explore the **We Are Salt and Light** success stories relating to **prayer, learning, reaching out** and **acting** to share God's love with others, as they encounter Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit's transforming presence. We Are Salt and Light includes resources intended as a catalyst for both the New Evangelization and the continuing development of vibrant communities living the Gospel in the United States.
5. Read about **Saints and the Works of Mercy** in stories of saints who exemplified the works of mercy in their lives. The stories are paired with reflections on the works of mercy from personal experiences of the Notre Dame family of faith. Explore the ways that **Maryknoll** priests and brothers bring the presence of Our Lord into the world by practicing the Works of Mercy.

6. Learn more about these **Prophetic Witnesses Against Racism** for the inspiration to become a courageous witness to the truth that all people are united in God's love. These Catholic witnesses will inspire your community to work to heal the evil of racism in their daily lives.
7. Study Catholic Social Teaching with the **CST-101 Video Series** by the USCCB. Discussion guides, handouts, posters and additional resources related to Catholic Social Teaching are also available along with the series of seven free videos available in both English and Spanish.
8. This **short, 8-minute video** from Ascension Presents provides a basic introduction to Catholic Social Teaching and encourages exploration of Catholic Social Teaching with teens with the **5-session Connected study program**.
9. The **Made in God's Image resource packet** from the Archdiocese of Washington shares catechetical resources that are designed to bring about personal conversion and commitment to ongoing education on issues surrounding racism. Resources include a family prayer, tips for life-giving dialogue and lessons/activities for adults, children, youth and families.
10. For more information, resources or ideas to engage in additional formation and discussions around racial justice in your parish community, please contact the **Office of Human Dignity and Solidarity**.