



ARCHDIOCESE OF CINCINNATI

Office of the Archbishop

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April 26, 2021

My Dear Friends in Christ,

The sin of racism is a “particularly destructive and persistent form of evil” in our country. In our pastoral letter, *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love*, the bishops of the nation explained, “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” (p.3). This definition may be readily understood, but, like all sin, racism can be more challenging to recognize when it creeps into the complications of our everyday lives. Yet, the love of Christ compels us to not turn away from these challenges. As my brother bishops and I stated, “This command of love can never be simply ‘live and let others be.’ The command of love requires us to make room for others in our hearts. It means that we are indeed our brother’s keeper” (p.17). [Click here to read the full U.S. bishops’ pastoral letter.](#)

On April 21, the priests of the archdiocese gathered for our annual convocation to focus on the topic of racism. Together, we heard the powerful testimonies of clergy, academics, and faithful parishioners concerning the impact of racism on their personal lives and society as a whole. Bishop Shelton Fabre, chair of the U.S. Bishops Ad hoc Committee on Racism, joined us to stress the importance of preaching on the sin of racism. He recognized that “very tragic and painful events within recent years and months have brought racism into focus once again.” He urged homilists to not miss the opportunity “to give guidance and direction to those entrusted to our pastoral care.” As priests, deacons, religious, and lay members of the one body of Christ, I urge all of us to not waver in our prophetic commitment to end racism in our society, church, and hearts.

This commitment comes at such a timely moment, as we have now learned the outcome in the case addressing George Floyd’s death. As the U.S. Bishops stated, “The death of George Floyd highlighted and amplified the deep need to see the sacredness in all people, but especially those who have been historically oppressed. Whatever the stage of human life, it not only matters, it is sacred.” The bishops go on to say, “[We] pray that through the revelation of so much pain and sadness, that God strengthens us to cleanse our land of the evil of racism which also manifests in ways that are hardly ever spoken, ways that never reach the headlines. Let us then join in the hard work of peacefully rebuilding what hatred and frustration have torn down. This is the true call of a disciple and the real work of restorative justice.” [Click here to view the full statement from the USCCB.](#)

One of the resources available to us is our archdiocesan Anti-Racism Task Force, which works with schools and parishes to educate and form Catholics on Church teaching as it relates to

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the history and effects of personal and systemic racism. Furthermore, we have partnered with the broader faith community to continue to seek justice and a recognition of the dignity of all people. To learn more about this, please contact the Catholic Social Action Office at (513) 263-6690.

We pray for God's grace as we seek to further transform our hearts, our Church, and our society, that we may become a people faithful to Jesus' call to love our neighbors, especially the oppressed and marginalized. May the Holy Spirit guide our efforts to intentionally and with great humility encounter those of other racial backgrounds so as to be present with, listen to, and enter into relationship with each other, always seeking to build a kingdom of life, justice, compassion, and peace.

With prayerful best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dennis M. Schnurr". The signature is written in a cursive style and includes a small cross symbol at the beginning.

Most Reverend Dennis M. Schnurr
Archbishop of Cincinnati

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