

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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THIRD STATION

Jesus falls for the first time

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

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

Leader: *Yet it was our pain that he bore, / our sufferings he endured.
Though harshly treated, he submitted / and did not open his mouth; / Like a
lamb led to slaughter / or a sheep silent before shearers, / he did not open his
mouth. (Isaiah 53:4a,7)*

Jesus accepted his cross and carried it valiantly despite his weakened state. But he could not bear up under the load. He fell.

Racism imposes heavy burdens, too. African Americans must live with ugly taunts, nooses, and expressions of white supremacy. Jews face swastikas. Muslims encounter insults and rejection. Native Americans are derided for trying to preserve their cultures. Latinos are labeled with ugly slurs. Asians are reduced to one-dimensional stereotypes. Refugees and immigrants endure xenophobic rhetoric and constant suspicion. Those who are targets of racism often live with the persistent fear that hatred will explode – again – into stark violence against them.

Will we leave our brothers and sisters to bear the cross of racism alone? Or will we step out in solidarity and accompany them as they travel their own “way of the cross”?

ALL: Jesus, the cross of injustice is heavy. Help us not to dismiss it as just “the way things are,” but rather to acknowledge the crosses others must bear because they are different, and to find ways to accompany them in their journey.

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FOURTH STATION

Jesus meets his mother

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

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

Leader: *Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, “. . . (you yourself a sword will pierce) so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed” And his mother kept all these things in her heart. (Luke 2:34-35,51)*

Mary was cautioned from the beginning that the blessing of bearing Jesus would come with a cost. The joys and the sorrows were mingled in her unflinching heart.

A mother’s pain is no different in communities of color today. When her child suffers, she suffers. When her child is deprived of opportunity, she aches. When her child is beaten, she nurses the wounds. And when her child is murdered, she identifies the body at the morgue.

But the pain often begins long before then. African American mothers launch their teenagers toward independence with “the Talk” about how to survive a traffic stop. Undocumented immigrant mothers go to work every day with contingency plans for who will care for their children if they are detained or deported.

Jesus looked into the eyes of his mother and felt her pain. Will we be like him and stand with the mothers who store up so much grief and anxiety in their tender hearts?

ALL: Jesus, although at this time you could not relieve your mother’s fears, you did acknowledge her pain. Help us to stand with anxious and grieving mothers and work to end the injustices that besiege them.

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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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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/.