



Prayer Service for an End to Racism

Opening Song:

Christ be our Light – [Click here for lyrics](#)

Opening Prayer

Wake me up Lord, so that the evil of racism
finds no home within me.

Keep watch over my heart Lord,
and remove from me any barriers to your grace,
that may oppress and offend my brothers and sisters.

Fill my spirit Lord, so that I may give
services of justice and peace.

Clear my mind Lord, and use it for your glory.

And finally, remind us Lord that you said,
"blessed are the peacemakers,
for they shall be called children of God."

Amen.

A reading from Gospel according to Luke

There was a scholar of the law who stood up to test him and said, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read it?" He said in reply, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." He replied to him, "You have answered correctly; do this and you will live."

But because he wished to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead. A priest happened to be going down that road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. Likewise a Levite came to the place, and when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight. He approached the victim, poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his own animal, took him to an inn and cared for him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction, 'Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I shall repay you on my way back.' Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers' victim?" He answered, "The one who treated him with mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

An excerpt from U.S. Catholic Bishops Pastoral Letter on Racism

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.

When we give in to our fears of the other because he or she is of a race different from ourselves, when we prejudge the motives of others precisely because they are of a different color, when we stereotype or ridicule the other because of racial characteristics and heritage, we fail to heed the command of the Prophet Amos: "Seek good and not evil, that you may live; then truly will the Lord... be with you as you claim!... Then let justice surge like water, and goodness like an unfailing stream."

The structures of our society are subtly racist, for these structures reflect the values which society upholds. They are geared to the success of the majority and the failure of the minority. Members of both groups give unwitting approval by accepting things as they are. Perhaps no single individual is to blame. The sinfulness is often anonymous but nonetheless real. The sin 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, least we become bystanders who tacitly endorse evil and so share in guilt in it."

Examination of Conscience: A Look at Myself in the Mirror

Conscience is the "core and sanctuary" within us where we are alone with God and hear his call to "love good and avoid evil" and "do this, shun that." Let us examine our conscience in light of the sin of racism, asking ourselves:

1. **Have I** fully loved God and fully loved my neighbor as myself?
2. **Have I** caused pain to others by my actions or my words that offended my brother or my sister?
3. **Have I** done enough to **inform myself** about the sin of racism, its roots, and its historical and contemporary manifestations?
4. **Have I listened to** my brothers and sisters of different races and truly heard their experience without trying to justify or explain?
5. **Is there** a root of racism **within me** that blurs my vision of who my neighbor is?

6. **Have I** ever witnessed an occasion when someone "fell victim" to personal, institutional, systematic or social racism and I did or said nothing, leaving the victim to address their pain alone?
7. **Have I** ever witnessed an occasion when someone "fell victim" to personal, institutional, systematic or social racism with *me* inflicting the pain, acting opposite of love of God and love of neighbor?

Act of Contrition

My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against You Whom I should love above all things, I firmly intend, with Your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.

Petitions

To the Creator of all races, we lift up our prayers for an end to discrimination and injustice...

- For George Floyd (pause), Breonna Taylor (pause), Ahmaud Arbery (pause), Sean Reed (pause), Tony McDade (pause), and all those whose lives have been destroyed by racism, systematic oppression, and police aggression... We Pray for Justice (Lord hear our prayer)
- That the Church may be a witness through word and deed that each person has inherent dignity and value as a beloved child of God... We Pray for Justice (Lord hear our prayer)
- For those who march, protest, advocate, and legislate for racial justice and equality, that "they may be sustained in hope, empowered with courage, and filled with grace to persevere in love"... We Pray for Justice (Lord hear our prayer)
- That when the marches come to an end, we continue to move forward with a renewed sense of friendship, unity, and purpose... We Pray for Justice (Lord hear our prayer)
- For the conversion of the hearts and minds of those who allow another person's race to influence their relationships and actions and ignore the Gospel call to love our neighbors as ourselves ... We Pray for Justice (Lord hear our prayer)
- That each of us may honestly acknowledge our attitudes, biases, words, actions AND inactions that have contributed to the problems of discrimination and racism... We Pray for Justice (Lord hear our prayer)

- That we may have the courage “to influence the attitudes of others by expressly rejecting stereotypes” and instead upholding and celebrating the uniqueness of every individual and the beauty of our nation’s racial diversity... We Pray for Justice (Lord hear our prayer)
- For true peace built upon justice, love, and equality... We Pray (Lord hear our prayer)

Closing Prayer and Blessing

God of Heaven and Earth,
you created the one human family
and endowed each person with great dignity.

Aid us, we pray, in overcoming the sin of racism.
Grant us your grace in eliminating this blight
from our hearts, our communities,
our social and civil institutions.

Fill our hearts with love for you and our neighbor
so that we may work with you
in healing our land from racial injustice.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

We have prayed and now, with changed hearts, let us move our feet to action.

Closing Song:

This Land is Your Land

This land is your land, this land is my land
From California to the New York island,
From the redwood forest to the Gulf Stream waters;
This land was made for you and me.

As I was walking that ribbon of highway
I saw above me that endless skyway;
I saw below me that golden valley;
This land was made for you and me.

I've roamed and rambled and I followed my footsteps
To the sparkling sands of her diamond deserts;
And all around me a voice was sounding;
This land was made for you and me.

When the sun came shining, and I was strolling,
And the wheat fields waving and the dust clouds rolling,

As the fog was lifting a voice was chanting:
This land was made for you and me.

This land is your land, this land is my land
From California to the New York island,
From the redwood forest to the Gulf Stream waters;
This land was made for you and me.

In the shadow of the steeple I saw my people,
By the relief office I seen my people;
As they stood there hungry, I stood there asking
Is this land made for you and me?

Nobody living can ever stop me,
As I go walking that freedom highway;
Nobody living can ever make me turn back
This land was made for you and me.

This land is your land, this land is my land
From California to the New York island,
From the redwood forest to the Gulf Stream waters;
This land was made for you and me.