

Executive Overview

In response to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishop's Pastoral Letter against racism, "Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love," the diocesan Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism was formed in April 2019. For the past several months, our committee has hosted several listening sessions and has been diligently working to explore ideas for concrete solutions to address the racism that pervades our society and our Church.

"Open Wide Our Hearts" was the first major pastoral letter on racism issued by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops since 1979. The pastoral letter was created in the wake of the white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. The timing of the pastoral letter clearly acknowledges the abhorrent acts of hate and violence and, to a great degree, the status of race relations in our country today. Publication of a pastoral letter on racism is what Catholics would expect from its Bishops and they tell us why the letter was written: "The persistence of the evil of racism is why we are writing this letter now. People are still being harmed, so action is still needed. What is needed, and what we are calling for, is a genuine conversion of heart, a conversion that will compel change, and the reform of our institutions and society". The real work of combatting deeply-entrenched racist tendencies is the concerted action required to affect sustainable change. Without such action, the pastoral letter is no more than an institutional response to the events of Charlottesville and another pastoral letter on racism that has little influence where it counts – with the faithful in our parishes, schools, chancery offices, and other Catholic institutions. Many Catholics, including the clergy, have a hard time talking about race and racial injustice. A perfect example are comments from a parishioner invited to attend one our listening sessions. *"Probably won't attend as I don't feel it's necessary today. Fifty years ago, these discussions would have been appropriate. America and the Church is not racist today.*

Within eight months of its publication, Bishop Shelton Fabre, Chair of the USCCB Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism, shared that 2000 copies of the letter were sent, and listening sessions were held in at least 13 dioceses. A study guide to accompany the letter was released in September, and the ad hoc committee is working with Catholic publishers to create textbooks to better engage students in Catholic schools across the country. However, an informal survey conducted about one year after publication of the pastoral letter by Olga Segura, Associate Editor at America Magazine, paints a

different picture. In her survey, Ms. Segura asked this question: "Has your diocese started any new initiatives based on the 2018 pastoral letter on racism published by the USCCB?" Her findings are outlined below:

"There are 197 dioceses in the United States. At the time of writing this story (and after following up via phone), I had received 74 responses. Thirty dioceses have started new initiatives, while 12 already had anti-racism programs in place. These include dioceses in Tucson, San Diego, Santa Rosa, Pensacola-Tallahassee, Marquette, Mich.; Jefferson City, Mo.; Salt Lake City; La Crosse, Wis.; and archdioceses in Chicago, Detroit and Seattle. Many of the dioceses that responded to the pastoral letter hosted listening sessions or started book clubs or discussion groups based on "Open Wide Our Hearts." These include the dioceses or archdioceses of Springfield, Ill.; Lafayette and Indianapolis, Ind.; Owensboro, Ky., Kalamazoo, Mich.; St. Cloud, Minn.; Newark, N.J.; Galveston-Houston and San Antonio, Tex.; Richmond, Va.; and Milwaukee, Wis. The Archdiocese of Baltimore started a working group based on the pastoral letter. Several dioceses have begun or continued ambitious projects. In 2015, the Archdiocese of St. Louis started the Peace and Justice Commission following the fatal shooting of Michael Brown in 2014. After the pastoral letter was approved last November, the commission began forming working groups."

Catholic Social Teaching, which calls for respect for the human dignity of every person, condemns Racism in all its forms. The depth, magnitude, and complexity of racism requires radical action, prayer, reflection and learning to help build a stronger multicultural Church and society. The challenge of our Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism is to develop an action plan that goes beyond good intentions and honestly examines the systems in which we operate and change them. This work must include clergy, lay persons, and representation from institutions within the diocese.

Actions/Accomplishments of the Anti Racism Task Group

- The Diocesan Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism hosted a two-day conference – day one for clergy and day two for lay leaders (approximately 25 clergy attended on day one and approximately 150 lay leaders attended day two).
- Hosted over a dozen listening meetings in parishes, schools and ecclesial leadership groups:
 - 6 parishes (St. Basil, Good Shepherd, St. Rose, Sacred Heart and St. Francis of Assisi, St. Ignatias)
 - 4 high schools (CB, St. Francis, Jesuit & Christo Rey)
 - 3 ecclesial groups (Presbyterial Council, Diocesan Pastoral Council & Faith Formation staff)
- Diocese hosted the play - *Tolton: From Slave to Priest* – the story of Father Augustus Tolton, the first African American priest. The play was presented at four different locations in the diocese. 3 in the Sacramento area and 1 in Vallejo.
- Task Group participated in a *Common Ground* event hosted by St. Basil church in Vallejo. The event initiated discussion with In January 2020, the Task Group started is broadened the listening campaign to include leaders from other faith communities. The listening campaign has been halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic but will resume in the coming weeks and months.

Learnings/Themes from the Listening

- Teachers, priests, DREs, catechists don't feel equipped to talk about race
 - ***For example: Black students and students of color have been hurt by the way that subjects like the Stephon Clark shooting were discussed in the classroom. Discussions evolved into a debate. The shooting was a personal issue for them, "because we live it every day." When they showed emotion during the conversation they were told that they were too emotional and felt silenced.***
- Re-traumatization: Attempts to discuss race in the classroom were often negative experiences because facilitators were not trained in trauma informed dialogue.
- Multiple experiences of racist actions exhibited by parishioners and church leadership for which there was no accountability.

- Black Catholics feel invisible.
 - ***For example: In several listening session, different parishes throughout the diocese chose not to distribute the information form the Bishop's office to the parishioners regarding the listening sessions, Tolton plays and other associated communications, citing that "there were more important issues that should take priority" or "we do not have an issue here".***
- Many other racial groups within the Church experience racism.
- Division among cultural groups.
- Isolation.
- Many people are afraid to say the wrong thing – fear of being labeled racist.
- Lack of representation in leadership/ administration positions.

Recommendations:

1. Racial Dialogue Training sessions:
 - a. The number one recommendation for year two of the anti-racism initiative will be to focus on dialogue training for our diocesan and parish leaders.
 - b. Training led by Dr. Javier Watson (St. Francis HS) and his team
 - c. Proposal:
 - i. Fiscal Year 2020-2021:
 1. PHASE 1: Host Three (4 hour) Introductory Dialogue Trainings for teachers, DREs, catechists and laity
 - a. Proposed start third quarter of 2020
 - b. Groups limited to 60-75 people
 2. PHASE 2: Host one (15 hour) Racial Dialogue Facilitator (Pilot) Training for 25-30 participants selected from the attendees of phase 1
 - ii. Fiscal Year 2021-2022:
 1. PHASE 3: Train the Trainer – Advanced Dialogue Training
 - a. Personnel completing this training can perform Phase 1 and Phase 2 training locally
2. Evaluate the task group's goals and develop a comprehensive strategic plan that clearly defines the goals and actions needed to create an environment which lifts up the voice of faith against racism in our parishes and Church communities. Our goals should bring "life" to the worship experience of African American Catholics in our parishes throughout the diocese.
 - a. Strategic planning is a critical business model for positioning an organization for success, aligning leaders to a common plan, and guiding decisions. Replicating such a business model for developing a strategic plan contributes to our ability to formulate a comprehensive measurable plan - a blueprint for success.
3. Evaluate the structure of Task Group.
 - a. Racism is not simply an issue of individual personal prejudices; it is a systemic problem structured into institutions and organizations. For that reason, institutional leaders, employers, employees, and other stakeholders should be a part of the committee. It is

recommended that the composition of the Ad Hoc Committee against Racism be restructured to include members who better represent the make-up of the diocese and the institutions served.

Such as or for example include:

- A priest and/or deacon who is not of an ethnic minority group
- A member of the Diocesan Human Resource Department
- A decision-maker from the Catholic Schools Department
- A Campus Ministry Leader/Staff
- An elementary school principal or teacher
- A parish Director of Religious Education (DRE)
- A representative of the Newman Center

4. Continue to facilitate listening sessions within the Churches of the diocese as well as with the broader contingency of our ecumenical and interfaith-alliances.
 - a. Encourage parishes to develop/continue listening sessions using the model recommended by the USCCB Pastoral letter, “Open Wide Your Hearts”, or develop other parish programs that continue the conversation on racism as envisioned by the pastoral letter. This can be done by individual parishes, such as programs designed by St. Ignatius and Sacred Heart parishes or can be done within respective deaneries.
5. As part of Ministry days, include a workshop on racism and ethnic sensitivity.
 - a. Day one - designed for ministers, catechists and Catholic school teachers.
 - b. Day two – racial dialogue training introduction.
6. Implement the Racial Healing Module to communication strategies and narratives that promote effective responses to racism and to integrate racism topics and awareness into the fibers of diocesan operations (parishes, Catholic Schools, Newman Centers, and diocesan departments).
7. Create and disseminate theological, liturgical, pastoral, and community resources. Documents developed by the USCCB can be used.

8. Develop curriculum in the Catholic schools, age appropriate for elementary through high school, for learning about race and racism. Curriculum should be extended to include parish religious education for children's faith formation and parish youth groups.
9. Support scholarships for teacher development relating to teaching about race, racism cultural competency, and racial awareness; establish educational opportunities for students and school staff.
10. The Office of Clergy Formation – convene an annual workshop for priests and deacons of the diocese designed to provide educational opportunities for clergy to learn about racism and tools for learning meaningful dialogue, so as to be informed about racism and ways to address it. A critical component is the inclusion of lessons/tools for clergy on how to develop sermons and preach against racism in their Sunday homilies.