

“We are called not only to a radical conversion of heart but a transformation of socially sinful structures as well.”

DWELL IN MY LOVE

**A Pastoral Letter on Racism
by Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I.
Archbishop of Chicago**

April 4, 2001

33rd Anniversary of the Death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dwell In My Love

A Pastoral Letter on Racism
by
Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to those who helped to research and write this Pastoral Letter in its various stages: Bishop Joseph N. Perry, Sister Jamie Phelps, O.P., Ph.D., John T. McGreevy, Ph.D., and William Purcell.

I am grateful to others who read the draft and provided helpful comments and criticism: Bishop Raymond Goedert, Bishop John Gorman, Bishop Thad Jakubowski, Bishop Edwin Conway, Bishop Gerald Kicanas, Bishop John Manz and Bishop Jerome Listecky; Father Lawrence Dowling, Father Leonard Dubi, Father Thomas Swade, Father Derek Simons, S.V.D., Deacon Ralph Shaw, Sister Anita Baird, D.H.M., Sheila Adams, Sheila Bourelly, Joan Neal, John Lukehart, Aurie Pennick, Terri Johnson and Clarence Wood.

I am especially grateful to the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, United States Province; the Chicago Province of the Society of Jesus; the Society of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary; the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago; the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Regional Community of Chicago; the Sisters of St. Joseph of La Grange, the Order of Preachers Dominican Central Province; the Claretians and the Society of the Divine Word for their generous financial support on behalf of this project.

I am grateful always for the prayers and support of the priests, deacons, religious women and men, and the lay faithful of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Finally, as a bishop of the Catholic Church, I hope to include and respect many different experiences in a letter such as this but most of all, I intend to present the teachings of the Church in our present context. The teaching on the sin of racism is integral to our faith and cannot be ignored. I hope Catholics will be helped to put this teaching into practice in this local Church I serve as pastor.

Contents

1

1. Introduction: Dwelling Together

God, the Creator

Jesus, the Lord

The Holy Spirit

5

2. Examining Our Present Situation: How Do We Dwell Together?

Four Types of Racism:

Spatial, Institutional, Internalized and Individual

15

3. Envisioning Our Future: How Might We Dwell Together?

A. Dwelling with God in Ordinary Life

Inclusive Communities: Living with Our Neighbor

Economic Justice: Working with Our Neighbor

Supporting Culturally Diverse Social Institutions

B. Dwelling with God in His Church

*The Eucharist as the Sacrament
and Means of Communion*

The Empowering Gifts of the Spirit

23

4. Conclusion: An Agenda for Addressing Racial and Systemic Injustice

Archdiocese

Parishes

Liturgy

Catholic Elementary Schools,

High Schools, Colleges and Universities

Community Action

DWELL IN MY LOVE: A PASTORAL LETTER ON RACISM

1. Introduction: Dwelling Together

If you dwell in me, and my words dwell in you, ask whatever you want and you shall have it. This is how my Father is glorified; you are to bear fruit in plenty and so be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Dwell in my love. If you heed my commands, you will dwell in my love, as I have heeded my Father's commands and dwell in his love. (John 15:7-10)

In this first year of the third millennium, we are called again by Pope John Paul II to open wide the doors to Christ and to the people of God in our midst. Acknowledging our sins, we continue the journey of conversion and reconciliation, which prepared the great Jubilee of the year 2000.¹ As the Church, we are filled with the sanctifying love of the Holy Spirit; but, at the same time, we are a community, which “clasps sinners to her bosom, at once holy and always in need of purification.”² This pastoral letter will address one of the many sins which affect our relationships among ourselves and infect, as well, institutions within the Archdiocese of Chicago and in our society: the sin of racism.³

To address something, to speak to it, we have to recognize it. Growing up in Chicago, I first began to think about racism when, as a young boy, I left Chicago for a summer in Memphis and in Nashville, Tennessee. My parents permitted me to spend time with a Franciscan priest stationed in Tennessee, a priest who was not African American but who served black Catholics as their pastor.

The children with whom I played that summer were good companions and we became friends. Within the parish complex and the immediate neighborhood of my new friends' homes, only the priests and the sisters and I were white. The difference that skin color makes struck me forcibly, however, only when my friends took me to downtown Memphis. In Chicago, when I took the bus with my friends, we always rushed to sit in the very last seat, the long seat that permitted us to look through the back window of the bus as we moved forward. Although we would not have been able to explain it, we created our own space and had the feeling of surveying the bus and the street from a privileged vantage point. We struggled and jostled to sit in that last seat.

Sitting in the back of the bus had a very different connotation in a southern state governed by “Jim Crow” laws. When my friends and I got on the bus in Memphis, I rushed to the back of the bus, only to be told by the conductor that I could not sit there. What was worse, however, was that I could not sit with my friends anywhere on that bus. Thoroughly embarrassed, I did not much enjoy that afternoon in downtown Memphis and never afterwards got on a bus there. That evening, the Franciscan priest, who was so kind to me and such a good pastor to my friends, explained the “social customs” in Tennessee. For me, it was not so much an experience of inequality as of forced separation. For my friends, it was “the way things are.”

When I got off the train in Union Station, arriving home from my summer in Tennessee, my parents asked me many questions about my weeks away from Chicago. When I talked about my experience on the Memphis bus, they explained that “Jim Crow” laws were wrong. They treated other people as inferior, and God made us all equally valuable. When I asked why we did not have any “Negro” friends, the answer pretty much was the equivalent of “that’s the way things are.” Both my father and my mother had African American acquaintances from work and other circumstances. They spoke well of them, but we never visited each other’s homes nor went to one another’s family celebrations or wakes. Nor was it any more thinkable in Chicago than in Tennessee that we would live in the same neighborhood. The teaching in my home and in my parish was good; the experience just didn’t match the teaching. That gap is called “sin,” sometimes personal and social, sometimes institutional and structural, sometimes all of these.

Before continuing with this letter, I would encourage each reader to ask when he or she first became aware of racial difference and of how they reacted to it. A Chicago businesswoman told me once, as a simple matter of fact, that she never wakes up in the morning without realizing immediately that she is a black woman. How should the rest of us react to that fact of her consciousness? Why does our faith tell us that we are to “dwell together”?

God, the Creator

The book of Genesis reveals God as the Creator of a vast universe teeming with a rich diversity of plants and animals, surrounded by the sea and sky. The rising and setting of the sun and moon marks off the rhythm of creation's life. A God whose own being and goodness generated more being and goodness called creation into being separate from himself and yet intrinsically dependent upon him. United in the dynamics and mutual self-giving of their life as God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit create out of infinite love the universe and all that fills it. According to the book of Genesis, the culmination and high point of God's creative energy is the creation of the human race on the sixth day:

God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them...and God saw everything that he had made, and it was very good...(Genesis 1:27; 31).

Though God intended that all creation live in the harmony and love that unites it as one, human beings, exercising their free will, defied the will of God and replaced the divinely planned harmony with division, the divinely willed unity with conflict, the divinely intended community with fragmentation. One form of human division, conflict and fragmentation is racism: personal, social, institutional and structural. Racism mars our identity as a people, as the human race made in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:27). The 1979 U.S. Bishops' pastoral on racism teaches that “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.”⁴

Jesus, the Lord

Jesus, the incarnation of the eternal Son of God, entered human history two millennia ago. When Jesus came into the world, his people, God's people, the Jewish people, were a conquered people, often despised by their foreign rulers. Jesus gave us the means to find our way back to his Father, whom he taught us to call our Father. Jesus, the new Adam, went to his death on the sixth day to recreate us by redeeming us from sin and Satan. We are again to walk in unity, as one people enjoying the variety of plants, animals and human cultures, which constitute the world redeemed by Christ. Through his preaching and healing, through the pattern of discipleship he called people to follow, through his bodily resurrection from the dead, the Lord Jesus literally embodies for us a new way of life, which conforms to the will and reign of God. Jesus transcends, challenges and transforms everything that divides the human community (Gal. 3:28). He calls us back to a communion with one another, a unity, which reflects the communion of God's own Trinitarian life.

May they all be one as you, Father are in me and I in you. So also may they be one in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. The glory which you gave me I have given to them, that they may be one, as we are one; I in them and you in me, may they be perfectly one. Then the world will know that you sent me, and that you loved them as you loved me (John 17:20-22).

Racism, whether personal, social, institutional or structural, contradicts the purpose of the incarnation of the Word of God in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Racism contradicts God's will for our salvation. We

cannot claim to love God without loving our neighbor (Mat.22: 34 ff.). Since racism is a failure to love our neighbor, only freedom from racism will enable us to be one with God and one another.⁵

The Holy Spirit

The vision of a community dwelling in God's unconditional and universal love may sound like an impossible dream, but in God all things are possible (Mark 10:27). The radical conversion needed to overcome the sin of racism is made possible by the Holy Spirit. Sent by the risen Christ, the Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts and in our midst to empower us to live truly as God's people. By the power of the Holy Spirit acting in us, we can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine (Eph. 3:20). Jesus assured his disciples that the abiding presence of the Spirit would empower them to be faithful:

When the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father—he will bear witness to me. And you also are witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning (John 15:26-27).

2. Examining Our Present Situation: How Do We Dwell Together?

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit instills within us the desire to continue the mission of Jesus as his disciples. The Spirit calls us to reflect about how we embody God's salvation and his universal love in parishes and schools, in the Pastoral Center and in other Catholic institutions. The Spirit moves us to reflect on how to make that love visible in our neighborhoods and places of business, in our work and recreation.

I invite all Catholics of the Archdiocese to examine with me how our local Church reflects that unity in diversity, which mirrors the nature of the Blessed Trinity. We cannot be leavens of love and justice in a society fighting racism if we are captured by the sin of racism in the Church.

Each of us needs to examine how we in the Archdiocese respond to Jesus' prayer that we be one. How does the Archdiocese manifest the unifying presence of the Spirit in the midst of the racial and cultural, the gender and class, the religious, theological and ideological diversity that characterizes our society?

For Chicago Catholics of a certain age, and for some who are not Catholic too, seeking the answer to these questions brings us back to patterns of life, which protected and nurtured even as they also divided. "Where are you from?" could not be answered simply with Hyde Park or Humboldt Park, the West Side, the South Side, the Southeast Side, the Northwest Side or Evanston. The answer that counted was St. Clement, St. James, St. Thomas the Apostle, Holy Angels, Holy Cross, St. Anselm, St. Elizabeth, St. Stanislaus, Visitation, St. Sabina, St. Mel and Holy Ghost, St. Malachy, Our Lady of Sorrows, St. Matthew, Precious Blood, St. Agatha, St. Boniface, St. Thomas More, St. Mary Magdalene, St. Margaret of Scotland, or St. Nicholas. The parish -- the place where Catholics attend Mass, confess their sins, send children to school, watch children get married and bury their dead -- mattered as much as official city designations.

The Baltimore Catechism, once memorized by generations of Catholics, asked, "Where is God?" The answer was "everywhere" and in Chicago, Catholic parishes seemed to be everywhere. The fact that these parishes inspired loyalty to a place and devotion to God is perhaps Chicago Catholicism's great achievement. Catholic institutions have helped shape this area's story.

If strong parish communities remain today the glory of Catholic life in Chicago and throughout Cook and Lake counties, the way in which parish communities can become parish fortresses was sometimes and can be still today a source of tragedy. For too many Catholics during the decades just passed, "Where are you from?" became an interrogation, not a gesture of welcome. Some groups embraced ethnocentric patterns of exclusivity and notions of racial superiority without considering the moral implications or the psychological and emotional wounds inflicted upon others. In some cases, the vision of faith was narrowed; the community of faith became a private club.

Resistance to racial integration and culturally mixed communities is as old as the first Christian communities, where Jewish Christians and Greek Christians found themselves at odds. For Chicago Catholics, cultural differences were especially important in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, with the great migration of European Catholics to this city. Chicago's "race" problem a century and more ago was one of Germans versus Irish, Poles versus Germans, Christians versus Jews, Protestants versus Catholics. My predecessors as Archbishop sometimes addressed these disputes, spoke to Catholics on their common membership in the Mystical Body of Christ and preached intermittently against the sin of anti-Semitism. While ethnic and cultural barriers somewhat diminished after the First World War and the cut-off of mass immigration from Europe, the ethnic identity of parishes remained strong.

Another mass migration, this one internal to the country, presented more imposing challenges. Between the 1910's and the 1960's hundreds of thousands of African Americans moved to Chicago from the South. Forced to live on the near south and west side of the city in often substandard housing owned by landlords living elsewhere, many African American families that could afford better housing could not move into nearby neighborhoods because of the color of their skin. Catholics, loyal to their parishes, often made up the bulk of the white population in neighborhoods near the expanding African American sections of the city. Sometimes these same Catholics mixed parish loyalty with racial prejudice in a desperate, always unsuccessful, effort to "save" particular neighborhoods by preventing the entrance of black people. Another question became part of the conversation: "Where are they now?" And everybody knew who "they" were and knew, as well, which blocks were changing, sometimes almost overnight, from white to black.

Many have heard the stories of priests, nuns and lay people unwilling to welcome even Catholic African Americans into parishes and schools.⁶ There are stories of Catholic politicians working to sustain racial segregation in neighborhoods and in the workplace and tales of fear that a school would be "ruined" because Father or Sister allowed African American Catholics to enroll their children. When the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. marched in Chicago during the summer of 1966, he described the racism and hatred he encountered as more "hostile" and "hateful" than anything he had witnessed in the South. Some of the neighborhoods he entered were home to Catholic parishioners.

In order to examine our present situation completely, it seems important also to note that factors other than racial prejudice enter into the history of resistance to integrated neighborhoods. Most working class and middle class people, of any race or religion, cherish their home as their biggest investment. Their house is their legacy to their children. The destruction of the economic value of their house is a threat to all that they have accomplished. Unfortunately, white people have too often equated the racial integration of a neighborhood with decreased property values. Sometimes their fears were encouraged by real estate agents eager to buy homes at prices far below their real value. Fear of economic loss is not evidence of prejudice. Fear of losing one's life savings is not the same as fear of a different race, but the two fears can reinforce each other.

There is another fear that complicates this history: the fear of violence. The desire to live without fear for one's own safety and that of one's family is not evidence of racism. Everyone shares the fear of violence. Prejudice is evident, however, if it is simply assumed that people of another race must be violent because they are who they are. White people might find themselves afraid in a black neighborhood, but blacks have even more reason to be afraid in many white neighborhoods. The original impetus for this pastoral letter was the terrible beating of Lenard Clark in 1997 and the Archdiocesan Task Force on Racism that responded to it.

Unfortunately, the fears of economic loss and of personal violence can blind people to what their Catholic faith calls them to do—dwell together in love. These fears have to be honestly addressed if we are to live in a genuinely multi-racial and multi-cultural society.

That some Catholic priests, nuns and lay people, both black and white, marched with Dr. King suggests another dimension to our history. Long before the civil rights marches of the sixties, the Catholic Church in Chicago was blessed with faith-filled people eager to see the Catholic community welcome all cultures and races. They were willing to sacrifice much in order to live in a genuinely multi-racial society. Catholics of all races worked to integrate Catholic and public institutions in the 1940's, 1950's and 1960's. Chicago's African American Catholic community courageously insisted that racism must have no place in the Church founded by Christ.

Some African Americans participated with great hope in these local efforts; others contributed to the foundation and development of the national black Catholic organizations.⁷ These groups serve today as places where African American Catholics work to develop leadership and institutions that nurture and sustain the Catholic faith in a manner sensitive to black culture. They are often places for prophetic voices within the church, speaking against racism and cultural domination within Church and society.⁸ Sadly for all of us, some African Americans have left our Catholic community to join other Christian faith communities, independent "Catholic" churches or even Islam, in part because they found it difficult to reconcile their own identity with manifestations of racism within the Catholic Church.

The story in the almost forty years since the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. marched through Chicago neighborhoods is at once familiar and new. Racism is still found in varying degrees in our churches and schools, just as it haunts our city and suburbs. The combined influences of racial discrimination and social isolation, at a moment when a wealthy society should confront these problems directly, continue to make the plight of many African Americans and other people of color Chicago's greatest shame. Today, however, the careful way in which some Catholic parishes in neighborhoods undergoing racial and cultural transformation have begun to confront these changes directly is a source of pride to me as Archbishop of Chicago.

While African Americans and other groups have made much progress in education and employment, especially in the last generation, race relations in the Chicago metropolitan area have become more complicated as neighborhoods receive immigrants from India, China, Africa, Vietnam, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean. They add new hues to Chicago's one largely black and white picture. Contemporary racism has a multicultural face.⁹

Catholics in the Archdiocese of Chicago now celebrate Mass in more than twenty languages, making the Church of Chicago more representative of the Church universal. One-third of the city's residents are now either Spanish-speaking immigrants or their descendants, from countries as diverse as Colombia, Puerto Rico, Cuba and Mexico. The dramatic increase in the population of Hispanic Catholics in the entire metropolitan area has not prevented them from experiencing the effects of racism. "While Hispanic Americans have not endured slavery, they too have been a conquered people and systematically excluded from the mainstream American society because of prejudice, racism, and segregation."¹⁰

For Catholics, however, the stability of our parish institutions, the fact that Catholic parishes typically serve the people within a given territory and not a self-chosen congregation, offers unusual opportunities. Despite economic problems, the Archdiocese has tried to maintain a Catholic presence in urban neighborhoods populated by African Americans, Hispanics, Asians and people with roots in various European countries. Through the Parish Sharing Program, some Catholic parishes in affluent areas have formed partnerships with parishes serving poor neighborhoods. This sharing springs from the conviction born of faith that we are many parts of the one Body of Christ, which is the Church.

As the answer to the question, “Where are you from?” becomes more complicated, we should realize that the future of race relations in Chicago and its surrounding communities is tied to how willing we are as Catholics to live and worship in parishes that are diverse communities of faith, anchoring neighborhoods where all people can live together as members of the one human family.

Four Types of Racism: Spatial, Institutional, Internalized and Individual

The face of racism looks different today than it did thirty years ago.¹¹ Overt racism is easily condemned, but the sin is often with us in more subtle forms. In examining patterns of racism today, four forms of racism merit particular attention: spatial racism, institutional racism, internalized racism and individual racism.

Spatial Racism

Spatial racism refers to patterns of metropolitan development in which some affluent whites create racially and economically segregated suburbs or gentrified areas of cities, leaving the poor -- mainly African Americans, Hispanics and some newly arrived immigrants -- isolated in deteriorating areas of the cities and older suburbs.

Myron Orfield,¹² the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities, and other experts have documented the devastating impact of massive economic disparities between communities and of isolating people geographically according to race, religion and class.¹³ These disparities undermine the regional economy and the moral basis of the metropolitan area. Spatial racism creates a visible chasm between the rich and the poor, and between white people and people of color. It marks a society that contradicts both the teachings of the Church and our declared national value of equality of opportunity. Orfield and William Julius Wilson have noted the economic inequities which result from this form of racism: lack of decent affordable housing; withdrawal of home mortgage funds; public schools with inadequate staff, faculty, physical quarters and supplies; decaying infrastructure; lack of capital investment for business and commerce; little or no opportunities for jobs near home and insufficient public transit to jobs in the suburbs.¹⁴

The spatial racism of our society creates a similar pattern in the Church. Geographically based parishes reflect the racial and cultural segregation patterns of neighborhoods and towns.

Institutional Racism

Racism also finds institutional form. Patterns of social and racial superiority continue as long as no one asks why they should be taken for granted. People who assume, consciously or unconsciously, that white people are superior create and sustain institutions that privilege people like themselves and habitually ignore the contributions of other peoples and cultures. This “white privilege” often goes undetected because it has become internalized and integrated as part of one’s outlook on the world by custom, habit and tradition. It can be seen in most of our institutions: judicial and political systems, social clubs, associations, hospitals, universities, labor unions, small and large businesses, major corporations, the professions, sports teams and in the arts. In the Church as well, “. . .all too often in the very places where blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans and Asians are numerous, the Church’s officials and representatives, both clerical and laity, are predominantly white.”¹⁵

Sometimes, with a genuine desire to be more inclusive, one or two black, Hispanic, Asian or Native Americans are asked to fill leadership positions in order to change the internal culture of an institution. But the racist disposition of the institution can remain largely unaltered when the non-whites do not acquire full participatory rights. Without rising to levels of influence that can change the entrenched attitudes, approaches and goals of the institution, they live with and even have to preside over policies, procedures and regulations that leave the institution in a basically racist mode. Often, when these select few people of

color exhibit qualities of morality, intelligence and skills, which contradict the low expectations of the racial stereotypes applied to their cultural groups, they are viewed as “exceptional anomalies.”

Indifference to rates of violence against the lives of blacks, Hispanics, Asians and Native peoples is another sign of institutional racism. “Abortion rates are much higher among the poor and people of color than among the middle class. As a result of abortion, the United States is a far less diverse place.”¹⁶ Racism is also visible in imprisonment and in the administration of the death penalty. There are a disproportionate number of blacks, Hispanics, Asians and Native Americans and low-income persons from all ethnic and racial groups on death row. “[Such] defendants are more likely to be sentenced to death than white defendants, for the same crimes.”¹⁷ Other areas where institutional racism finds a home are in health care, education and housing.

Internalized Racism

Many blacks, Hispanics, Asians and Native Americans are socialized and educated in institutions which devalue the presence and contributions of people of color and celebrate only the contributions of whites. Because of their socialization within the dominant racial and cultural system, people of color can come to see themselves and their communities primarily through the eyes of that dominant culture. They receive little or no information about their own history and culture and perceive themselves and their communities as “culturally deprived.” Seeing few men and women from their own culture or class in leadership roles, they begin to apply to themselves the negative stereotypes about their group that the dominant culture chooses to believe.

Individual Racism

Unlike spatial and institutionalized racism, which are more public in nature, individual racism perpetuates itself quietly when people grow up with a sense of white racial superiority, whether conscious or unconscious. Racist attitudes find expression in racial slurs, in crimes born of racial hatred and in many other subtle and not so subtle ways. People that are horrified by the Ku Klux Klan might quite readily subscribe to racial stereotypes about people of color.

Poor, middle class and upper class people of all cultural groups often demonstrate feelings of prejudice toward people of a different national, cultural or economic background. Some adopt a “skin-color, racial hierarchy” both within and outside their own cultural group. When individuals automatically award superior status to their own cultural group and inferior status to all those outside it, they are acting as racists.

3. Envisioning Our Future: How Might We Dwell Together?

The Gospel compels us to love our neighbor as ourselves, to abandon patterns of seeing those who are racially or culturally different from ourselves as strangers and to recognize them as our brothers and sisters. Even those who have suffered at the hands of others, individually or collectively, must pray to overcome hostility, forgiving those who have offended them and asking forgiveness from those whom they have offended. We must embrace one another as formerly estranged neighbors now seeking reconciliation.

You have heard that they were told, love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But what I tell you is this: love your enemies and pray for your persecutors; only so can you be children of your heavenly Father, who causes the sun to rise on good and bad alike, and sends the rain on the innocent and the wicked... There must be no limit to your goodness, as your heavenly Father's goodness knows no bounds (Matthew 5:43-45; 48 and Luke 6:27-31; 35-36).

Again, when the learned Pharisee asked Jesus what was the greatest commandment of the law, he replied:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with your entire mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it; you shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two great commandments (Matthew 22:34-40 and Luke 10:25-27).

Maintaining current patterns of ethnic, cultural, racial and economic isolation and hostility tarnishes our call as Church to be a universal sacrament of salvation. Consciously changing these patterns returns us to our fundamental identity as a community called to universal communion with God and with one another.¹⁸

A. Dwelling with God in Ordinary Life

We meet God in the created, visible, tangible surroundings of the home, the neighborhood and the workplace. We encounter God in and through our spouse, children, brothers and sisters, the family next door, the shopkeeper on the corner, our teachers, the stranger on the street. In short, we meet God in and through people of every color, ethnic background, religion, class and gender. God is active in and through the people, places and circumstances that constitute our ordinary daily life.

This belief places upon us the mission to transform all relationships into instances of love and justice. Our love of God, expressed in prayer, pilgrimages and other acts of devotion, must be made visible in our practice of the love of neighbor, expressed by establishing patterns of right relationships in our daily lives, in our work and everyday encounters. Loving and just relationships are the manifestation of our communion with God.

Ethnic, cultural, and racial diversities are gifts from God to the human race. In Jesus, we are called to a radical love—to love of the stranger as our neighbor (Luke 10:25-37). Others may be different from us in every respect except one: each man, woman, or child we encounter is also a child of God, a brother or sister in the Lord, whom we should welcome as our neighbor. The stranger whom we encounter is really our neighbor in Christ. Through communion with our neighbors who are racially and culturally distinct from ourselves, we begin to live as a community the unity in diversity that is the life of the Triune God. We can learn to live, work and pray in solidarity with the stranger now recognized as our neighbor.

Inclusive Communities: Living with Our Neighbor

Our neighborhood is the first place we encounter those with whom we are to dwell in love. A just neighborhood must be open to all people—black and white, Hispanic and Asian, young and old, wealthy and poor, Christians and people of all faiths. Access to housing in particular, needs to be fair and open. In a society that is still structurally racist, open housing cannot be taken for granted; it must be achieved.

We confront racist patterns in housing sales and rental markets through programs that help establish and maintain diversity throughout a community. To be successful, such programs require collaboration among neighboring communities, towns and villages throughout the Chicago metropolitan area. The goals are clear. Neighborhoods must be safe and free of discrimination and hate crimes; schools must provide a good education for all students; transportation must be accessible. The means to reach the goals involve cooperating across racial and cultural divisions.

Economic Justice: Working with Our Neighbor

Although the phenomenon of racism can exist independent of economic factors, it is bound up with entrenched poverty, which persists despite our national affluence. Most poor people are still white; but blacks, Hispanics and Native Americans are disproportionately poor. “Despite measurable progress during the last 20 years, people of color still must negotiate subtle obstacles and overcome covert barriers in their pursuit of employment and/or advancement.”¹⁹

“Church teaching on economic justice insists that economic decisions and institutions be judged on whether they protect or undermine the dignity of the human person. We support policies that create jobs with adequate pay and decent working conditions, increase the minimum wage so it becomes a living wage, and overcome barriers to equal pay and employment for women and minorities.”²⁰

Supporting Culturally Diverse Social Institutions

Social institutions in a culturally diverse nation benefit from the sharing of the values and skills honed in the various communities of peoples who populate it. In the global context in which we live today, the ability to live and work in a culturally diverse environment equips us to work toward universal peace and justice. Our efforts to encourage judicial and political systems, social and professional organizations, health care facilities, educational institutions, labor unions, small and large businesses, major corporations, the professions, sports teams and the arts to be welcoming will be more credible when the Church truly becomes a model of what she advocates.

Our desire as disciples of Jesus is to support people of every race and ethnic group in enjoying their human rights and freedom. We are called to promote love, justice and what Pope John Paul II has called a “culture of life.” Until all are free to live anywhere in the Chicago metropolitan area without fear of reprisal or violence, none of us is completely free. The administration of justice and the institutions of our civic life must be marked by respect for all. These desires shape the goals of the Church as she works for social and economic justice and promotes life.²¹

B. Dwelling with God in His Church

By baptism in Christ, we have been graced and called into the community, which is his Body. The members of the early Church gathered in the name of Jesus to worship his Father and to continue the mission Jesus left them. Today, as that same Church, we too gather in the name of Jesus and commit ourselves to his mission. Through the sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation), we are given the grace to live in union with God and our neighbor as we follow the way and mission of Jesus.

The Second Vatican Council acknowledged and supported cultural diversity in the Church when it encouraged the “fostering of the qualities and talents of the various races and nations” and the “careful and prudent” admission into the Church’s life of “elements from the traditions and cultures of individual peoples.”²² The use of vernacular languages and cultural symbols and adapted rituals within the Church’s liturgy is a sign of Catholic unity and serves to bring all peoples and cultures into the worship of God, who rejoices in the beauty of everything he has made.

The Second Vatican Council also called the local Churches to bring into their life “the particular social and cultural circumstances” of the local people. This requires that priests, religious women and men and lay ecclesial ministers are called forth from among all the various cultural and racial groups which constitute the Church.²³ To speak of oneself as Irish Catholic, German Catholic, Polish Catholic, Hispanic Catholic, African American Catholic, Lithuanian Catholic is not divisive, provided each of these differences is lived and offered as a gift to others rather than designed as an obstacle to keep others out. Catholic universality is marked by the contributions of all cultures. Each cultural group has enriched our Catholic community with its unique gifts. This sharing of differences within the community of one faith is the path to salvation willed by the Triune God, whose love is universal.

Loving only people who are just like ourselves, loving only those who are members of our biological family or who share our own ethnic or cultural background, our own political views or our own class assumptions, does not fulfill the challenge of the Gospel.

If you love only those who love you, what reward can you expect, even the tax collectors do as much as that. If you greet only your brothers, what is there extraordinary about that? Even the heathen do as much. There must be no

limit to your goodness, as your heavenly Father's goodness knows no bounds
(Matthew 5:46-48 and Luke 6:32-34; 36).

Striving to be a witness for Jesus Christ as a good neighbor to all is difficult. "It seems easier to sit in our divisions and our hatreds. It seems easier to ignore the gap between rich and poor; to forget the unborn and unwanted; to block out those who are not free...because they are in prisons; to live tied up in the bonds of personal and institutional racism. But we cannot."²⁴ We cannot, because we are called to dwell together in God's love.

To embrace the vision proclaimed in Jesus' preaching of the reign of God, we need to see new patterns and possibilities. Too often, when decisions about the future of the Archdiocese are being made, the persons around the table do not adequately reflect the rich cultural diversity that shapes our Church, city, nation and world.²⁵ As we continue to struggle against racism within the Archdiocese, we see a time when all of God's children will be contributing to the governance of this local Church. Constructing socially just patterns of relationships within our ecclesiastical institutions presents the same difficulties met in being a good neighbor anywhere; but, as Christians seeking to be true disciples, we can never abandon our efforts to embody the love and justice given us by Christ. Most of all, we can count on his grace to bring power to the vision faith gives us.

The Eucharist as the Sacrament and Means of Communion

We are most ourselves in the celebration of the Eucharist. Our sacramental worship unites us and makes us a community of believers. The Mass calls us to communion with one another in Christ Jesus. The proclamation of God's holy word and reflection on it within the celebration of the Eucharist, which is Christ's life poured out for us, cannot help but deepen our spiritual unity and make our social solidarity possible. Too often, however, the pattern of culturally and racially homogenous parishes, sometimes established in the wake of "white flight," contributes to Catholic parishes being instances of racial and cultural exclusion. Sunday, it has often been noted, is the most segregated day of the week in metropolitan Chicago, as it is elsewhere. "We have preached the Gospel while closing our eyes to the racism it condemns."²⁶ Our failure to live the Gospel of God's unconditional and universal love in culturally and racially inclusive parishes and communities contributes to our society's failure to confront the sin of racism.

The magnificent cultural diversity we witnessed around the Eucharistic table during our Archdiocesan millennium celebration of the feast of Corpus Christi in Soldier Field was just a small glimpse of the possibilities for our future. As a local Church, we gathered as the Body of Christ. We gathered with longing for a time when, wherever we gather, we will do so enriched by our active welcoming of all those whom God loves. Our gathering for Mass is always a gathering in the name of the Father of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. In the Eucharistic assembly we share all the cultural, racial economic and spiritual gifts given us by the Spirit in order to enrich and transform both Church and society.

The Empowering Gifts of the Spirit

From diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds, we accept and embrace in faith the love of God that compels us to dwell together in love. After reflecting on the historical, social and economic dimensions of our complicity with the sin of racism, we ask as Catholics for the grace of conversion from the sin of racism, which has separated us from our neighbor and from God.

The Church was born with the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Virgin Mary and the apostles and on the nations gathered in Jerusalem for Pentecost. Since that moment two thousand years ago, the indwelling of the Spirit in the Church and in each of her members pulls us toward dwelling together in love. The gifts the Spirit brings transform all our relationships.

The Church in any society is to be a leaven. The Church is always more than any particular place or society. She finds her identity as Catholic, all embracing. If she is faithful to her Lord, the Savior of the world, the Church will not only proclaim who he is but will herself act to become the womb, the matrix, in which a new world can gestate and be born. Listening and welcoming, the Church is a place of encounter, of racial dialogue and intercultural collaboration. In a context of universal mutual respect born of love, the Church offers the gifts that transform the world and bring salvation in this life and the next.

4. Conclusion: An Agenda for Addressing Racial and Systemic Injustice

Holy Scripture and Catholic social teachings proclaim the dignity of the human person and enjoin us to reform the structures of our society that ignore and undermine this fundamental truth. We are called not only to a radical conversion of heart but to a transformation of socially sinful structures as well.

Following are some suggestions for taking the necessary steps to dwell in God's love and to address racial and systemic injustice:

Archdiocese

- Provide sessions on the importance of ethnic and racial diversity for Archdiocesan and parish staffs, pastors, principals and teachers.
- Evaluate administrative hiring patterns so that persons in managerial and decision-making positions in the Archdiocese reflect the ethnic and racial composition of our diverse Catholic community.
- Identify and nurture vocations among African Americans, Hispanics, Asians and Native peoples to serve as priests, deacons, religious women and men, and lay ecclesial ministers.
- Educate for ministry in a racially, ethnically and culturally diverse Archdiocese.
- Implement the Archdiocesan purchasing policies, which commit us to doing business with minority vendors.
- Join support groups working for racial justice in the workplace, i.e. Project Equality.
- Avoid investing in companies that tolerate racism.
- Advocate for improved public transportation, allowing people in inner city and neighboring suburban communities to take jobs in out-lying suburban areas.
- Support church-based community organizations that work for economic justice.

Parishes

- Participate in Archdiocesan programs, such as the Workshops on Racism and Ethnic Sensitivity, designed to bring about better race relations in the parishes and neighborhoods.
- Foster hospitality in general but especially to those that are culturally different from the dominant culture of the parish.
- Participate in programs to identify and nurture vocations among African Americans, Hispanics, Asians and Native peoples as priests, deacons, religious women and men, and lay ecclesial ministers.
- Identify demographic trends in the parish, specify the particular issues of racial and ethnic diversity facing the parish and establish strategies to address these challenges from a vision of faith. Network with other parishes working for racial justice in their communities. Watch always for the destruction of neighborhoods by covert redlining.
- Participate in civic and ecumenical/interfaith organizations that work to promote racial justice.
- Begin the “Welcoming Our Neighbor” process in the parish by sponsoring a couple of families to transition out of public housing into the parish neighborhood.

- Participate in the Archdiocesan Sharing Parish program and develop the sharing relationships across racial and cultural lines.
- Take part in church-based community organizations that work for economic justice.

Liturgy

Liturgy is the worship of God. It should not be manipulated into directly serving any other purpose, even with good intentions and for a good cause. Nonetheless, the liturgy should make visible the unity which incorporates the diversity of Christ's people. It makes intercession, through Christ, for the forgiveness of our sins, including the sin of racism, and gives us the means to become a holy people.

- Develop liturgical resources to celebrate unity in diversity and express the sinful nature of racism.
- When appropriate, celebrate liturgies where the expression of our faith is reflected in the religious symbols, music and history of the many different peoples that make up the Archdiocese.
- Sponsor an annual Lenten service focused on racial reconciliation.
- Plan a Sunday as an anti-racism Sabbath.
- Include prayers for racial reconciliation and an end to racism in the intercessory prayers at the weekend liturgies.
- Preach on racism and racial justice.
- Celebrate through liturgies and festivals the racial and ethnic heritage of parishioners.
- Develop homilies for Pentecost, Corpus Christi and Trinity Sunday which interpret the assigned scriptures from the perspective of the call to human and ecclesial unity of all peoples in Christ.
- Pray for guidance and an end to racism, asking the intercession of saints such as St. Martin De Porres, St. Katharine Drexel, St. Josephine Bakhita, St. Peter Claver, Bl. Kateri Tekakwitha, Bl. Juan Diego, and others who have especially promoted racial harmony and social justice.

Catholic Elementary Schools, High Schools, Colleges and Universities

- Support the efforts of the Office of Catholic Schools' Racial Justice Committee, the Principals' Anti-Racism Committee and Catholic Schools Opposing Racism (COR).
- Diversify faculties and search for administrators and teachers that will be role models, especially for students of color.
- Use multicultural learning materials.
- Offer educational events that deal with racial justice, not only with the principles of our faith but with the history of our country. The enslavement of African Americans, the wars against the Native peoples, and the struggle for equality before the law should be taught and analyzed in the light of faith.
- Integrate in art, music, literature, history, science and religion courses the contributions of Hispanic, Asian, Native and African American peoples.
- Continue to work for justice in funding Catholic schools in order to give all students the education necessary to experience personal success and contribute to the common good.
- Publish materials on racism in the public media and on the Archdiocesan web site.
- Offer adults the opportunity to enter into a tutor-mentor relationship with underprivileged and at-risk students.
- Engage schools, especially schools in the parish-sharing program, to do student cultural and academic exchanges.

Community Action

- Continue to support the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, the anti-poverty program of the United States Catholic Conference, which aims to help poor people address the root causes of poverty.
- Watch real estate, housing and land use policies, especially in the communities where the Church owns land, in order to oppose economic segregation and foster the development of affordable housing.

- Support mass transit development throughout the metropolitan area.
- Advocate for “fair share housing,” in which a percentage of subsidized housing units are reserved for poor people in every municipality.

- Support just housing principles, so that mortgages can be obtained by the poor, and the negotiations of sales or rentals do not include price fixing, steering or blockbusting.
- Promote tax-sharing policies between wealthy and poor communities. These policies establish more equitable tax bases and lower tax-rates everywhere, allowing poorer communities to attract jobs and to pay for social and public services.
- Defend life by supporting legislation that opposes abortion and the death penalty.
- Support local organizations that work for fair housing and racial harmony, such as the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities and the Human Relations Foundation of Chicago.
- Vote for public officials committed to racial and systemic justice.

For more information, contact the Office for Peace and Justice (312) 751-8390 and the Office for Racial Justice (312) 751-8336.

¹ John Paul II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 33, 34, 35.

² Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: *Lumen Gentium* (LG), 8.

³ U.S. Catholic Bishops, *Brothers and Sisters to Us* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1979), 3. Though the U.S. bishops had spoken out against racism in earlier statements, this pastoral letter was the first to clearly identify racism as a sin.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, An Apostolic Exhortation to the bishops, priests and faithful of the entire Catholic Church on Evangelization in the Modern World, 9.

⁶ See John T. McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth Century Urban North* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

⁷ Similar national organizations have developed among Hispanic and Native American Catholics and are emerging among Asian Americans. These organizations have made ethnic isolation into an opportunity for the development of spiritually nurturing and culturally sensitive programs in which the human dignity of the members are nurtured and allows them to be active within the Church.

⁸ See Jamie T. Phelps, ed., *Black and Catholic: The Challenge and Gift of Black Folk: Contributions of African American Experience and World View to Catholic Theology*. (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1998).

⁹ See United States Catholic Conference Statement, “*Cultural Pluralism in the United States*” (Washington, D.C., USCC, 1980).

¹⁰ See National Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on African American Catholics and Committee on Hispanic Affairs, *Reconciled Through Christ*, p. 21 (Washington, D.C., USCC, 1997).

¹¹ See The Human Relations Foundation of Chicago, *Human Relations in Metropolitan Chicago 2000*, Chapter IV: A New Racism, p. 17.

¹² See Myron Orfield, *Metro-Politics: A Regional Agenda for Community and Stability*, revised edition, Washington, D.C., Brookings Institution Press, 1998).

¹³ See M. Leachman, P. Nyden, W. Peterman, and D. Coleman, *Black, White and Shades of Brown: Fair Housing and Economic Opportunity in the Chicago Region* (Chicago: Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities, 1998).

¹⁴ See Orfield and William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, The Underclass, and Disappears: The World of the Urban Poor* (New York: Alfred Knopf, Inc., 1996).

¹⁵ *Brothers and Sisters to Us*, p. 11.

¹⁶ *USA Today*, January 21, 1998.

¹⁷ See research documented by the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty.

¹⁸ *LG*, 1.

¹⁹ *Economic Justice for All*, #181.

²⁰ See Bryan Massingale, “*The Ethics of Racism*,” *Origins*, November 26, 1998, 425.

²¹ *Faithful Citizenship: Civic Responsibility for the New Millennium*, U.S. Bishops’ Administrative Board, p. 19.

²² *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 37, 40.

²³ *Ad Gentes*: Creed on the Church’s Missionary Activity, 10, 19.

²⁴ *Homily for the Feast of Corpus Christi*, Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I., June 24, 2000.

²⁵ *Brothers and Sisters to Us*, p. 11.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8.
