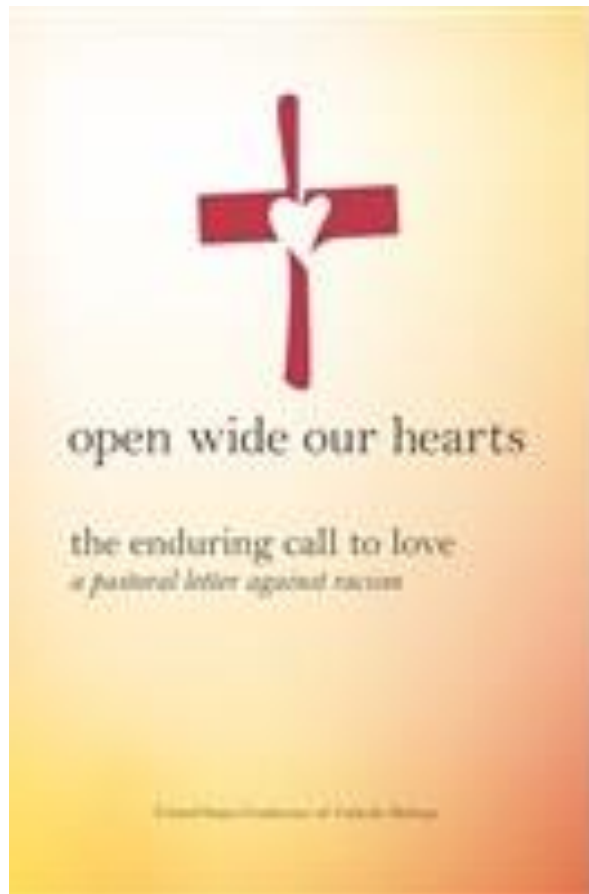


Opening Wide our Hearts: Talking to children about racism and our Catholic response



Objectives

- Look at the sin of racism through the lens of Catholic Social Teaching
- Provide tools and strategies to talk to the children and youth in your parishes and schools

What is racism?

- Failure to acknowledge the human dignity of the persons offended
- Failure to acknowledge fundamental truth that because all humans share a common origin, they are *equally made* in the image of God
- The combination of prejudice, power, and race
- Holding his or her own ethnicity as superior
- Individual and systemic
- Arises consciously or unconsciously

“

**RACIST ACTS ARE SINFUL BECAUSE
THEY VIOLATE JUSTICE. THEY
REVEAL A FAILURE TO
ACKNOWLEDGE THE HUMAN
DIGNITY OF THE PERSONS
OFFENDED, TO RECOGNIZE THEM
AS THE NEIGHBORS CHRIST CALLS
US TO LOVE (MT 22:39).**



OPEN WIDE OUR HEARTS, 63

”



Pope Francis

“Many people forced to emigrate suffer, and often, die tragically. Many of their rights are violated, they are obliged to separate from their families and, unfortunately, continue to be the subject of racist and xenophobic attitudes.”

July 15, 2014, in a message addressing a global conference in Mexico

“We cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in any form and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life.”

General audience after the killing of George Floyd

Quotes from Open Wide Our Hearts

- “Racism occurs because a person ignores the fundamental truth that, because all humans share a common origin, they are all brothers and sisters, all ***equally*** made in the image of God.”

Basis of all Catholic social teaching – we want our children to recognize that the unity of all humanity is rooted in our union with God.

- “Finally, too often racism comes in the form of the ***sin of omission***, when individuals, communities, and even churches remain silent and fail to act against racial injustice when it is encountered.”

Be willing to do some personal
reflection/examination of conscience

"HISPANICS"

"INDIANS"

"BLACK PEOPLE"

"WOMEN ARE"

Make note of your thoughts and ideas about groups of people.

"WHITE PEOPLE"

"ASIANS ARE"

Examining Our Subconscious Perceptions: A Reflection tool for adults

- What attitudes or perceptions do you have about cultural ethnic groups outside of your own?
- Where do you think these attitudes or perceptions came from?
- What is an example of a way that you may have acted differently toward someone of another ethnic group because of implicit bias?
- How does bias and the way it causes us to act fail to respect the dignity of every child of God?
- What can you do to overcome your own biases?

Doctrinal elements: The Unity of God's Family

- Every human life is sacred because it has been created in the image of God (CCC 258)
- The Church symbolizes the unity of the whole human race. (CCC 775)
- The Profession of Faith: “I believe in the Holy Catholic Church”
- The 10 Commandments: love of God and love of neighbor

Formation – provide formation on what Catholics believe regarding racism and human dignity

- Use developmentally-appropriate resources on Catholic Social Teaching
- Facilitate conversation – listen to understand
- Ensure representation of exposure to people from various racial and cultural backgrounds
 - Saints/holy people
 - Diversity among catechists
 - Children’s media

Tips for Teachers

- If your classroom has students present who are from a different cultural background than most other students, be sure not to ask students of a particular background to speak for their whole group
- If you have a multi-cultural classroom with students of many backgrounds, consider inviting everyone in the group to speak from their own experience—i.e., what special gifts from your culture are celebrated as part of the liturgy in your (or your parents') country of origin?
- Do you think that the materials you use in your own classroom/school/parish reflect the diversity of the Church/city/state/country/world?

Talking points – younger children

- We are all part of God's family. Who is in your family? How do you want them to be treated? – extend to all of God's family being treated fairly. Some people don't get treated fairly because of their skin color
- Wants vs. needs; people not getting what they need because of their skin color, background, education level

Build the vocabulary of your students

- Empathy
- Difference
- Inclusion
- Diversity
- Community
- Privilege

Affirm Difference and Understand Unity

- Define “difference” with children
- Stress that God delights in difference
- Affirm the dignity of ALL humankind
- Unpack the term “brothers and sisters” – what does this mean for children
 - How do you treat neighbors? Siblings? Friends? Strangers?

Using Scripture

- “Whatever you did for one of the least of my brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” (Matthew 25:40)
- “Love your neighbor as yourself.” (James 2:8)
- “Learn to do right, seek justice, defend the oppressed.” (Isaiah 1:17)

Talking to Teens

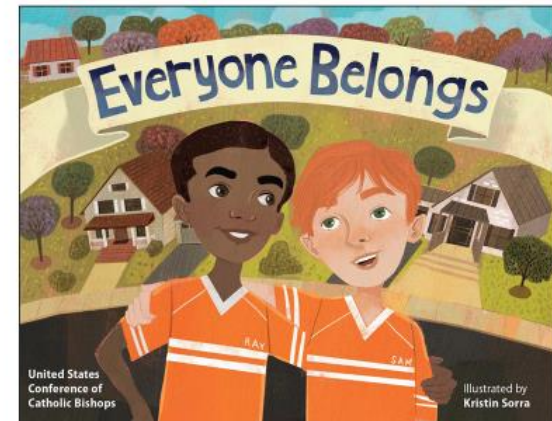
- 1). Unpacking “implicit bias” and how this differs from racism, how it is formed, how it is damaging and how to address it [NYTimes Film Shorts on Bias](#)
- 2). Exploring why “color blindness” will not end racism [MTV News](#)
- 3). [Implicit Association Tests](#)
- 3). Interviews with 12-year olds reflecting on their identities [SchoolBook Video](#)
- 4). Discussing systematic and structural racism [Racism is Real](#)
- 5) How do people often respond when confronted with biased comments [TedTalk](#)

*Discussion questions to accompany these videos will be emailed out to participants.

Children's Books

- Story of Cesar Chavez – Catholic who worked to change working conditions so farm workers could be treated more fairly
- Everyone Belongs – children’s book on racism and our Catholic response – Loyola Press
- God’s Very Good Idea by Trillia Newbell
- The Colors of Us by Karen Katz

LOYOLA PRESS.
A JESUIT MINISTRY



Additional Resources

- Office for Catholic Social Justice Ministry of the Archdiocese of Hartford <http://www.catholicsocialjustice.org/>
 - Resources - Racial Justice
 - Programs - Open Wide Our Hearts
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops <https://www.usccb.org/>
 - Stations of the Cross: Overcoming Racism
 - K-8 Educational Resources
 - High School Educational Resources
- Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston: [Tip Sheet for Talking to Children About Racism](#)

Discussion Question

Given what we just heard, what ideas do you have for incorporating the topic of racism in your formation opportunities?

Thank you for joining us!

Lynn Campbell

Director
Office for Catholic Social Justice
Ministry

Lynn.Campbell@aohct.org

(860) 242-5573 ext. 2689

Kelly Henderschedt

Archdiocesan Director of Catechesis
Office for Education, Evangelization,
& Catechesis

Kelly.Henderschedt@aohct.org

(860) 242-5573 ext. 2633