
LENT: TIME FOR RACIAL HEALING

In the midst of all of the racial chaos and tension that exists in our world, we need to stop and make a public confession. Yes, we have sinned.

Despite the rhetoric in our society about the need for racial healing and doing more to eradicate racism in the world, we have not always been faithful to our faith traditions and the gospel of love. Despite the statements that have been issued, the reports that have been made, the commissions that have been established, and the institutions that have attempted to show how serious they are about recruiting people from various cultural groups, we have not always looked upon our neighbor as our sister and brother. Despite living in an era of expanding diversity and being part of a multicultural world, we have not always recognized the image of the Compassionate and Merciful God in the people around us.

The Season of Lent gives us an opportunity to change the way we have perceived others in our world. We have a unique period of grace to begin a process of personal renewal and inner transformation. The first thing that we need to admit is that we are sinners. We need to admit that we have all contributed to the evil of racism and prejudice in the world.

We need to ask the Lord for grace and mercy to overcome these evils. We may also have to admit that we have an addiction to disliking, judging, and even hating certain people because of their race, nationality, culture, language, and way of life. The work of racial healing begins when each one of us admits that he or she has not always loved and respected others as sisters and brothers in the Lord.

If racial equality and justice for all are to be realized in the 21st century, then every person,

regardless of position in life, must make racial healing the primary goal and mission in the days and months ahead. Prayer by prayer, dialogue by dialogue, step by step, and day by day, we can eradicate the sin of racism in our world.

Use the following guide during the Lenten Season and beyond to foster opportunities for reflection and action in families, faith communities, and all groups committed to racial equality and justice.

FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Turning Away from Sin: Overcoming Prejudice and Racism

The Kingdom of God is at hand.
Repent, and believe in the gospel
(Mk 1:15).

Reflection: We believe that God is the source and center of our lives on earth, and that without God our lives cease to have meaning and purpose. Our faith also tells us that we are connected to God and to each other. To believe in God is to believe that every person is made in the image and likeness of God. The kingdom of God's love and peace is already within us. Racism has no place in the kingdom of God. We cannot claim to believe in God and fail to love and respect others.

Discernment: How do I understand my faith in God today? Is God the source and center of my life? Do I see myself being connected to God and to others? Do I understand in my mind and believe in my heart that every person reflects God?

Practice: During the week be mindful of the diversity of people around you. Affirm and support someone you have ignored at home, school, or in the workplace.

SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Christ-Centered Living

This is my beloved Son. Listen to him
(Mk 9:7).

Reflection: For Christians, Christ is the model of love, compassion, and peace. We look to the life and message of Christ for ways to redress the injustices in the world. Christ accepted and loved everyone: Jews and Gentiles, Samaritans, Pharisees, tax collectors, prostitutes, lepers, women, and children. Christ forgave sinners and never condemned anyone. Christ protected the dignity of everyone regardless of their position in the community.

Discernment: Do I make time to read the Word of God? Do I make time for solitude and prayer? Do I pray for a change of heart? Do I pray to become more like Christ? Am I loving and accepting of the people around me?

Practice: During the week be mindful of the presence of God in your life. Begin each day with the mind and heart of Jesus.

THIRD WEEK OF LENT

The Power and Wisdom of God: Confronting the Evil of Racism

We proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, Jews and Greeks alike, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:23).

Reflection: Christ came into the world to bring about unity and to lead all humankind to the kingdom of God. Christ died for the sake of

humanity and put an end to all the evil that dehumanizes and destroys life. The cross of Christ is a sign of contradiction. For those who claim to be followers of Christ, this sign of contradiction brings power and wisdom. With Christ we have the power to overcome the evil of racism. With Christ we have the wisdom to know what is right and just in the world.

Discernment: Do I accept my responsibility for the burden of the sin of racism and prejudice? Do I possess the power to put an end to racial hatred? Do I possess the wisdom to treat everyone with love and respect? Do I possess the courage to work for unity and peace with people at school, church, work, and in the marketplace?

Practice: During the week be open to the many faces of God. Avoid being critical and judgmental of others.

FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Healing the Wounds of Prejudice and Racism

But whoever lives the truth comes into the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God (Jn 3:21).

Reflection: Sometimes we are living more in the darkness than in the light. We live with old hatreds, resentments, anger, and indifference. We need to surrender to the Lord with the help of a spiritual guide. We need to look deep within and identify our own sinfulness with regard to racism and prejudice towards others.

Discernment: Do I work on becoming a better person? Am I aware of the pain and alienation I may have caused in people's lives? Am I afraid to ask for spiritual help? Do I resist admitting my sin of racism and prejudice? What blocks my spiritual growth and insight?

Practice: During the week examine your conscience. Find time to experience God's healing in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Building a Community of Love and Peace

Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit (Jn 12:24).

Reflection: Death is a part of the process of transformation. Death is the ultimate surrender to a power and a force beyond us. In death we come up against our powerlessness. We have an opportunity to die to selfishness, greed, prejudice, and racism. We can become a new community and civilization of faith, hope, and love. We can produce much fruit if we let go of our need for power and control over people's lives, especially the poor and vulnerable.

Discernment: Am I willing to let go of the need for power and control? Am I willing to walk with others in the fight against racism? Am I willing to commit my time, energy and talent to building a community of love and peace? Am I willing to become a new person rooted in the love and compassion of Christ?

Practice: During the week be aware of the needs of the poor. Ask some friends to join you in volunteering some time to work at a local soup kitchen or community service project.

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LENT

TIME



FOR

RACIAL HEALING

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