

# Encouragement Encouragement

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## Folly of Racism

THE HOST APOSTOLATE

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We live in a society that gives labels easily to many different things. Recently the word ‘self-isolate’ was added to the Oxford Dictionary! Language changes and evolves. This does not always matter but when it defines a predisposition or pre-assumption it can be misleading or even dangerous. The word ‘prejudice’, is a potent word and assumes a pre-judgment without cause. Closely related to this word is ‘racism’.

What does that mean and does it mean the same to everyone? The dictionary definition states that it is ‘the belief that each race has certain qualities or abilities, giving rise to the view that some races are better than others... or it produces ‘discrimination against’ or hostility towards’ other races. This is often extended to include countries, locations, and amusingly even people of nearby locations, villages close by.

We live in a world where we now experience a greater mingling of people and through ‘mass media’ learn about people from different places than our own. While once fear dominated our understanding, we now have the opportunity to ‘see’ for ourselves what a wonderful mixture of peoples populate this world of ours – a place where all people can find a home. Indeed, it is a matter of great rejoicing.

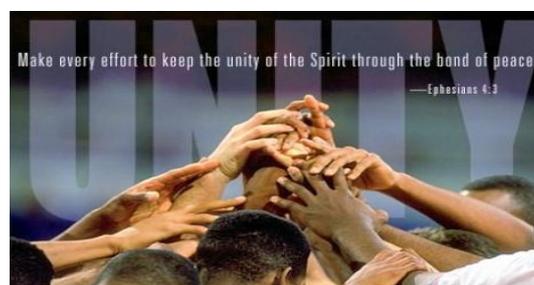
So why is racism a problem of our time – Fear, sadly, still plays a part as well as the consequences of history, past and present – but there is no sin in accepting our differences. After all, we are all different from each other, tall, short, black, white, and shades in between. The way to that definition of the dictionary is the lack of acceptance of our equality and the judgment that some are better than others simply because of a difference in either colour or class, poverty or riches.

This can have a totally divisive way of looking, judging or evaluating each other as brothers and sisters under one God. This attitude clearly can have no part in the life of any Christian.

**‘We know that every effort to better society, especially when injustice and sin are so ingrained, is an effort that God blesses, that God wants, that God demands of us’**

**St. Oscar Romero**

Its consequences, rather than allowing freedom of expression and different ways of doing things, and indeed, of ‘being’, limits the potential of all people. It leads to an entrenchment of attitude towards each other and hidden bias in our thinking. Through experience we often judge on the basis of what we have felt or lived through, or our current lives. This, however, has to be examined within ourselves and challenged rather than accepted as ‘fact’ and ‘indisputable’. All of us have biases or prejudices of some kind, which of themselves can lead to sin in the way we relate to others. It is important therefore to ask ourselves ‘why do I think this or that?’ and ‘is it fair or right?’. Sometimes we uncover attitudes and opinions that have simply been accredited without challenge. This is particularly true when we search for information that backs up our own ideas without looking at opposite viewpoints.



It was once believed that people of different races had different levels of inbuilt ‘intelligence’ and what suffering that brought about... While we (mostly, sad to say) know this to be ridiculous it has shaped much of our society.

If we want any examples from Scripture, Jesus Himself made a point of challenging the status quo. He praised the Roman Centurion for his Faith, better than those of Israel, even though he was of an occupying army (Luke 7:9) and did He not go out of His way to help and praise the Samaritans who were disliked and excluded by the Judeans? We can see this clearly when dealing with the Samaritan woman who begged for help for her daughter, and after testing her, proclaimed that she had great Faith (Matthew 15:28).

Did He not encourage the Disciples to go out and proclaim the Good News to the Whole World?

There is no place for racism in whatever way it manifests itself, obvious or subtle... from *any* group towards another group. The following is a statement worth noting:

'...Racism is not merely one sin among many; it is a radical evil that divides the human family and denies the new creation of a redeemed world.

To struggle against it demands an equally radical transformation, in our own minds and hearts as well as in the structure of our society. The Catholic community stands with all people who struggle for an end to racism and violence, in our families, in our places of worship, in our communities and in our world. We must continue to build bridges and we must confront racism and violence with a commitment to life, a vision of hope, and a call to action'.

*Archbishop Kurtz, 2015*

The teaching is clear: our primary commandment is the love each other as Jesus loves us. But we live in an imperfect world: I have spoken of personal prejudice and racist attitudes but we also hear much about how this spills over into the way we govern and run our institutions, churches and society in general and this kind is called 'institutional racism'. It is embedded in the way that we work and treat each other. Where this exists it is essential for any Christian to challenge and speak against it in any way that is fitting for them, remembering that peace and justice can only be achieved through love.

As Archbishop Flynn stated:

'Such attitudes and actions violate the rights and dignity of other people because of race. A second type of racism is institutional or structural. This type of racism exists where patterns of racial superiority are embedded in the systems and institutions of society. Such racism is less blatant and more complex, but it exists nonetheless. It is present wherever systems and institutions are created and maintained in such a way that they provide privilege or prejudice for one race over others. This type of racism can be seen, to varying degrees, in many of our social, economic, and political structures, including the structures of our Church.'

*Pastoral Letter on Racism (USA)*



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We often forget that 'Justice' is one of the 'Cardinal Virtues' that lead us to holiness as is Prudence, Temperance, and Fortitude. It may not be easy always to do what is right but as it is said 'Bad things happen when 'good' people do nothing' We are all called to 'act justly and love tenderly and walk humbly with our God' (Micah 6:8). Hate, surely, makes this impossible: surely love prohibits any form of racism in our hearts. Let us live as one people before God.

Halina Holman

### **Pope Francis**

The message of peace is not about a negotiated settlement but rather the conviction that the unity brought by the Spirit can harmonize every diversity. It overcomes every conflict by creating a new and promising synthesis. Diversity is a beautiful thing when it can constantly enter into a process of reconciliation and seal a sort of cultural covenant resulting in a "reconciled diversity". As the bishops of the Congo have put it: "Our ethnic diversity is our wealth... It is only in unity, through conversion of hearts and reconciliation that we will be able to help our country to develop on all levels." *Evangelii Gaudium* '13



### **Feast Days in August**

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

2<sup>nd</sup> St. Peter Julian Eymard

3<sup>rd</sup> St. Oswald,

4<sup>th</sup> St. John Vianney

#### **6<sup>th</sup> Transfiguration of the Lord**

#### **8<sup>th</sup> 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

9<sup>th</sup> St. Teresa Benedicta, Edith Stein: Patron of Europe

10<sup>th</sup> St. Laurence,

11<sup>th</sup> St. Clare of Assisi,

12<sup>th</sup> St. Jane Frances de Chantal

14<sup>th</sup> St. Maximilian Mary Kolbe

#### **15<sup>th</sup> Twentieth Sunday in Ord Time: Assumption BVM**

19<sup>th</sup> St. Oswin,

20<sup>th</sup> St. Bernard

#### **22<sup>nd</sup> Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time**

23<sup>rd</sup> St. Rose of Lima

#### **24<sup>th</sup> St. Bartholomew, Apostle**

26<sup>th</sup> Blessed Dominic Barberi,

27<sup>th</sup> St. Monica

28<sup>th</sup> St. Augustine of Hippo

#### **29<sup>th</sup> Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time**

30<sup>th</sup> Ss. Margaret Clitherow & A. Line & M. Ward

31<sup>st</sup> St. Aidan & the Saints of Lindisfarne