



In their pastoral letter against racism, **Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love**, the Catholic bishops of the United States invite conversion of hearts, minds, and institutions in order to address the evil of racism that still exists in our communities.

By our baptism, we are members of Christ's body and sharers in his mission. Imitating Christ, we must care for all members of our communities, honoring each person as unique, sacred, and created in the image of God. The bishops remind us, "The command of love requires us to make room for others in our hearts. It means that we are indeed our brother's keeper (see Gen 4:9)."

## How Can I Respond?

**(1) Listen to and know the stories of our brothers and sisters who have suffered from racism throughout history and continue to today.** Actively seek opportunities to engage with people of diverse backgrounds.

**(2) Work to address both individual and systemic racism.** Racism can be individual, when persons fail to recognize certain groups as created in the image of God and equal in dignity, or it can be systemic, where practices or policies are upheld that treat certain groups of people unjustly. These systems are often perpetuated due to the silence or unawareness of many. Commit to learning more about racism and employment, housing, wealth, education, criminal justice, and voting—and then get involved in diocesan, parish or community efforts to pray and work for conversion of both hearts and systems.

**(3) Think about what you can do, wherever you are.** In your family, think about who you socialize with on a regular basis. Intentionally create opportunities to interact with those you may not run into over the normal course of your week. Where in your community do you see diverse groups of people come together?

**(4) As individuals and communities of faith, examine your conscience.** Here are a few things you can ask yourself.

- Do I interact with people who are different from me outside of work or school?
- Have I taken the time to listen to the voices of others who don't look like me or have a different background and life experience than me? Do I listen or try to argue?
- Have I ever said the following phrases or something similar: "she's pretty for a black girl" or "he'd be handsome if he wasn't so dark" or other such judgments on beauty and acceptance?
- Do I blame the victims who suffer poverty and/or oppression for their plight?
- Do I dismiss the concerns or observations of others as simply being "overly sensitive" or being "politically correct"?
- Do I ask someone that I am an acquaintance with in social or professional settings to speak for their entire culture?
- Do I use a friend or family member who is of a different background than my own to "prove" that I have said or done nothing wrong?
- Have I ever said, "I'm not racist, but..."?
- Do I automatically associate negative attributes to an entire group of people?
- Do I use dehumanizing language about others, referring to people as "thugs, animals, illegals," etc.?
- Do I categorize other ethnicities into groups like "good" and "troublesome"?
- Do I take the time to learn and listen to the stories of others' lives in order to better understand them and the challenges they may face that I do not?
- Do I see Jesus Christ in each and every person I encounter every single time? Do I love each and every person regardless of their heritage, the choices they have made, their status in society, or the perception I may have of them?

**Source:** <https://togoforth.org/2017/12/28/engaging-in-a-racial-examination-of-conscience/>

## Next Steps

(1) Visit <https://www.dosp.org/racialharmony/> to sign up for messages that include information about study groups, civil dialogue, legislative advocacy and upcoming events within the Diocese of St. Petersburg. Updates will also be regularly posted on this page.

(2) Consider joining a community organizing group that is making a difference locally:

**Hillsborough Organization for Progress and Equality, HOPE**, is a multi-issue, grassroots, community organization consisting of 23 multicultural and interfaith member congregations throughout Hillsborough County. HOPE's mission is to promote justice, fairness, and the dignity of people, by engaging and training people to responsibly and successfully act together to hold officials accountable to improve the systems affecting the quality of life in our communities.

**Member Parishes:** St Peter Claver Catholic Church, Nativity Catholic Church, St. Stephen Catholic Church  
[www.HillsboroughHOPE.org](http://www.HillsboroughHOPE.org) 813-221-HOPE (4673)

**Faith and Action for Strength Together, FAST**, is a congregation-based community organization in Pinellas County whose purpose is to train low- to moderate-income residents from diverse congregations to work together to identify root causes of community problems and take action on these problems.

**Member Parishes:** St. Joseph Catholic Church, Espiritu Santo Catholic Church, Holy Family Catholic Church, St. Cecilia Catholic Church, Holy Cross Catholic Church, Most Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Church, St. Jerome Catholic Church, St. Matthew Catholic Church, St. Michael Catholic Church, Blessed Trinity Catholic Church  
<http://www.fast-pinellas.org> Phone: 727-823-9197

### Faith in Florida

The mission of Faith in Florida is to build a powerful multicultural nonpartisan network of congregation community organizations in Florida that will address systematic racial and economic issues that cause poverty for our families. With multiple different religious denominations and faith traditions represented, Faith in Florida seeks to provide a prophetic, interfaith voice on civil rights restoration, immigration and healthcare expansion.

<https://faithinaction.org/federation/faith-in-florida/>

3) Read Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/racism/>



**COURAGEOUSLY**  
*Living the Gospel*

<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/racism/parish-resources-on-racism.cfm>

