



November is Black Catholic History Month - "I Have the Strength for Everything Through Him that Empowers Me." (Phil 4:13). Our Lady Queen of Peace celebrates with a series of articles in November in the parish bulletins, as well as with the 21st

Annual Minkisi Mini-Retreat held on November 10, 2018. On November 14, 2018, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops approved *"Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love – A Pastoral Letter Against Racism"*. At www.usccb.org, you can find the entire statement. Here are excerpts of that pastoral invitation to more deeply love God and our neighbors.

"Through his Cross and Resurrection, Christ united the one human race to the Father...Despite many promising strides made in our country, racism still infects our nation."

"Racism arises when—either consciously or unconsciously—a person holds that his or her own race or ethnicity is superior, and therefore judges persons of other races or ethnicities as inferior and unworthy of equal regard. When this conviction or attitude leads individuals or groups to exclude, ridicule, mistreat, or unjustly discriminate against persons on the basis of their race or ethnicity, it is sinful. 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)."

"Racism comes in many forms. It can be seen in deliberate, sinful acts. In recent times, we have seen bold expressions of racism by groups as well

as individuals. The re-appearance of symbols of hatred, such as nooses and swastikas in public spaces, is a tragic indicator of rising racial and ethnic animus. All too often, Hispanics and African Americans, for example, face discrimination in hiring, housing, educational opportunities, and incarceration. Racial profiling frequently targets Hispanics for selective immigration enforcement practices, and African Americans, for suspected criminal activity"

"We have also seen years of systemic racism working in how resources are allocated to communities that remain de facto segregated. As an example, the water crisis in Flint, Michigan, resulted from policy decisions that negatively affected the inhabitants, the majority of whom were African Americans. We could go on, for the instances of discrimination, prejudice, and racism, sadly, are too many."

"Once "we have come to the conviction that one died for all"—and not just for ourselves—then "the love of Christ impels us" to see others as our brothers and sisters (2 Cor 5:14)...This love also requires justice."

"Love compels each of us to resist racism courageously. It requires us to reach out generously to the victims of this evil, to assist the conversion needed in those who still harbor racism, and to begin to change policies and structures that allow racism to persist. Overcoming racism is a demand of justice, but because Christian love transcends justice, the end of racism will mean that our community will bear fruit beyond simply the fair treatment of all."

"Our faith gives us a treasury of inspiring holy men and women who courageously worked toward racial reconciliation, showing us the way forward. There is, for example, the Servant of God Augustus Tolton, who was born into slavery and escaped to the free state of Illinois. Despite a strong calling to the priesthood supported by clergy who knew his faith, all the seminaries in the United States

rejected him. Having eventually made it to a seminary in Rome, he was ordained, and returned to serve as the first black priest born in the United States, where, again, he faced much discrimination and racism.”

“Once home and ministering to the People of God, Fr. Tolton was tormented by others, especially by a brother priest who was white. This priest made public and ugly statements urging the white people of the city not to go to Fr. Tolton’s parish. Through this long persecution, Fr. Tolton exhibited the love of Christ, forgiving what was done to him and continuing to serve others. Things got so bad, however, that Fr. Tolton accepted an invitation from Archbishop Feehan to move north to Chicago, where he served the faithful until his death in 1897. Fr. Tolton often spoke of how the Church had taught him to always “pray and forgive my persecutors.”

“During his ministry, Fr. Tolton corresponded with Mother (now Saint) Katharine Drexel, who helped support his parish work in Chicago. She is another example of people working for racial reconciliation. Following a directive from Pope Leo XIII in 1887, St. Katharine dedicated her life to working closely with Native Americans and African Americans, exhibiting genuine respect and concern. By the time of her death in 1955, St. Katharine had more than 500 sisters working in 63 schools and had established 50 missions for Native Americans in 16 states. She also founded 50 schools for African American students, including Xavier University of Louisiana, the first and only Catholic university in the United States established specifically for African Americans. Her motivation was clear. As she said, “If we wish to serve God and love our neighbor well, we must manifest our joy in the service we render to Him and them. Let us open wide our hearts. It is joy which invites us. Press forward and fear nothing.”

“To press forward without fear means “to walk humbly with God” in rebuilding our relationships, healing our communities, and working to shape our policies and institutions toward the good of all, as missionary disciples. Evangelization, which is the work of the Church, “means not only preaching but

witnessing; not only conversion but renewal; not only entry into the community but the building up of the community.” Racism is a moral problem that requires a moral remedy—a transformation of the human heart—that impels us to act. The power of this type of transformation will be a strong catalyst in eliminating those injustices that impinge on human dignity.”