



Statement on Racism

National Catholic Partnership on Disability

Recent events have thrust into the forefront of national and international awareness the evil of racism, prompting strong responses from Pope Francis and leaders of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

During a Wednesday general audience at the Vatican, our Holy Father declared, "We cannot close our eyes to any form of racism or exclusion, while pretending to defend the sacredness of every human life."¹

In a similar vein, the brutal killing of George Floyd prompted the bishop chairmen of seven USCCB committees to offer a statement that said in part: "We cannot turn a blind eye to these atrocities and yet still try to profess to respect every human life."²

As a Catholic organization tasked with promoting the rights of all persons with disabilities, the National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD) believes it is incumbent upon us and all Catholics to join our voices with those of Pope Francis and our bishops, denouncing racism in the strongest possible terms. **Racism is tremendously destructive of human potential, and compounds obstacles to the full development and participation of persons with disabilities in the life of the Church and society.**

In light of these considerations, NCPD recognizes the need for earnest prayer and concrete action to eradicate what some have characterized as our nation's "original sin" of racism. As Archbishop (emeritus) Alfred Hughes of New Orleans explained in 2005, "The founders of our nation were unable to come to agreement with regard to the issue of slavery. Hence, the Constitution failed to address it and our nation was born into what some have called America's 'original sin of racism.'"³





The USCCBs' 1979 pastoral letter states unequivocally that: "Racism is a sin: a sin that divides the human family, blots out the image of God among specific members of that family, and violates the fundamental human dignity of those called to be children of the same Father."⁴



So, we humbly ask the Lord's help in discerning concrete ways that we as individuals and as an organization might act to overcome this sin and its destructive impacts on persons and institutions in our society.

NCPD calls attention to several pertinent statements from the most recent USCCB pastoral letter against racism, "Open Wide Our Hearts:"⁵



"What is needed, and what we are calling for, is a genuine conversion of heart, a conversion that will compel change, and the reform of our institutions and society. Conversion is a long road to travel for the individual. Moving our nation to a full realization of the promise of liberty, equality, and justice for all is even more challenging. However, in Christ we can find the strength and the grace necessary to make that journey."



"As Christians, we are called to listen and know the stories of our brothers and sisters. We must create opportunities to hear, with open hearts, the tragic stories that are deeply imprinted on the lives of our brothers and sisters, if we are to be moved with empathy to promote justice."



"To do justice requires an honest acknowledgment of our failures and the restoring of right relationships between us.... It requires a determined effort, but even more so, it requires humility; it requires each of us to ask for the grace needed to overcome this sin [of racism] and get rid of this scourge."

1. Vatican press bulletin June 3, 2020

2. Statement of U.S. Bishop Chairmen May 29, 2020

3. New Orleans Archbishop emeritus Alfred Hughes, Made in the Image and Likeness of God: A Pastoral Letter on Racial Harmony, #27

4. Brothers and Sisters to Us: U.S. Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Racism in Our Day, 1979

5. Open Wide Our Hearts, The Enduring Call to Love, A Pastoral Letter Against Racism, USCCB, November 2018.