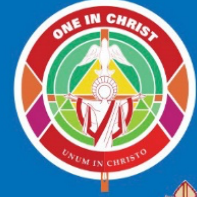


“My Church, My Story”



Overcoming Racism: Listen • Dialogue • Action



Opening Report: *Working Together to Overcome Racism*

"The only authentic moral response to this moment in our nation's history is a sustained conversion of heart and soul to genuinely comprehend the overwhelming evil of racism in our society, and to refuse to rest until we have rooted it out."

Bishop Robert McElroy, June 1, 2020

Prepared by:

Office for Ethnic and Intercultural Communities

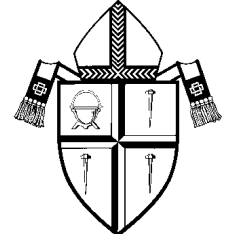
Cultural Competencies Planning Committee

Diocese of San Diego

October 15, 2020

The report presents recommendations for action to begin to root out the evil of racism in our diocese and our lives. These were proposed by participants in the diocese's on-going series of virtual forums on this issue. The Appendix is a summary of what they shared during the initial three sessions in August, focused on the African American experience, and their recommendations for individual, parish, and community transformation.

October 22, 2020



Dear Bishop McElroy,

When George Floyd's incident broke out in Minneapolis this past May, we, the Cultural Competency Planning Committee from the Office for Ethnic and Intercultural Communities, felt that it was urgent and important to set up a series of sessions to listen, dialogue and take action in overcoming racism in our Church and Society since it is affecting African American, Native American, Hispanic communities, and the diocesan faithful.

Due to the pandemic of Coronavirus, we have been using Zoom as our platform for conversation about the issues and our faith. In mid-August 2020, we began a virtual forum series *My Church, My Story: Overcoming Racism*. The first forum, series of three sessions, focused on the African American story. Listening to the participants' desire to learn more about others, two additional series were held -- two sessions focusing on the Hispanics/Latino experience in September, and currently two sessions focused on Native Americans. All of these sessions had been very fruitful, and grace-filled time for people who were there.

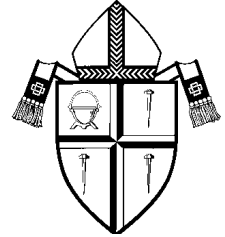
As a result, the planning committee had prepared a report for you to view that includes recommendations from the participants for the diocese, parishes, priests, and individuals. We hope you find this report helpful for the diocese to take the next steps in ministering to the people of God in San Diego. We will supplement this report with additional feedback and lessons learned from the Hispanic and the Native American forums. Early next year, we will continue *My Church, My Story* forums to listen and learn from the stories of our Asian and migrant brothers and sisters.

I am always grateful for your trust in me to serve God's people in this capacity for our diocese.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "R. Michael Pham".

Very Rev. Michael Pham
Office for Ethnic and Intercultural Communities



Office for Ethnic and
Intercultural Communities

October 15, 2020

Father Michael Pham
Vicar General
Diocese of San Diego

Dear Fr. Michael,

In August, 2020 the Office for Ethnic and Intercultural Communities Cultural Competencies planning committee hosted a three-part virtual forum named "My Church, My Story: Overcoming Racism." As noted in the attached report, the forum engaged members of the Diocese in conversations on racism in the Church, utilizing listening, dialog and action strategies to open hearts, promote understanding and develop action plan recommendations.

On behalf of the Planning Committee, we are pleased to convey to you the Opening Report of the *My Church, My Story: Overcoming Racism* series. The report contains recommendations for the Diocese, parishes, priests and individuals. The members of the Planning Committee strongly believe that the adoption of the recommendations in this report is essential to achieving healing and reconciliation in our Church.

The Planning Committee appreciates your leadership of this endeavor, and we look forward to our continued efforts to address this topic. We request that you convey this report to Bishop Robert W. McElroy for his consideration. If requested, we (and members of the Planning Committee) are available to discuss this report and its recommendations.

Sincerely,

Semret Hailemariam

Semret Hailemariam
Cultural Competencies Planning Committee

James E Moore

James. E. Moore
Cultural Competencies Planning Committee



Report Summary

Starting in the summer of 2020, the San Diego Catholic Diocese's Office for Ethnic and Intercultural Communities organized a series of forums to explore racism in the Catholic Church and what individuals, parishes and the diocese could do to root it out. The death of George Floyd and Bishop McElroy's call for the Church "to seize upon this moment as transformative and enduring" inspired this work.

The series is called "My Church, My Story: Listen, Dialogue and Action." Each forum, held via Zoom, consisted of powerful testimony from a speaker, followed by discussions in small groups. The speakers ranged from the Chancellor of the San Diego Community College District to a deacon and a religious woman with decades of service to a member of the Barona Circle of Elders to a young immigrant. The goal was to provide a platform where Catholics could share their experiences, learn from their fellow faithful and be inspired to become agents of change in their parishes and communities.

The initial forums focused on the African American, Hispanic and Native American experience in the Church and were held in August, September and October, respectively. A total of 229 people participated over seven nights, coming from 58 parishes, 4 Catholic schools or universities and 11 organizations, including religious orders.

An opening report to Bishop McElroy summarized the information gathered in the first three-part forum focused on African Americans. The report noted that for many participants learning about the racist acts perpetrated on fellow Catholics was both surprising and disturbing. Participants who had been the victims of racism expressed cautious hope that "real change" would happen this time.

The participants clearly expressed their interest in working with one another to create more inclusive communities, truly living the Gospel commandment "to love your neighbor." And most of all, they wanted to do this work as quickly as possible, given the urgency of the times.

The report detailed recommendations for action to begin to tackle racism. These underscored how everyone in the diocese has a role to play in this transformation – individuals, parish leadership, ministry offices, schools, universities and young adult Catholics.

Initial report's general recommendations

- Create a diocese-wide goal and social justice ethos statement.
- Develop a wide variety of educational programs at all levels of the diocese and parishes.
- Develop strategies for intercultural engagement in a variety of settings throughout the diocese.
- Empower clergy leadership to address racism at all levels of their communities.

Information about this series can be found on the web page www.sdatholic.org/racism, which includes videos of all the speakers, and resources on the issue of racism from the U.S. and California bishops and the diocese. The page includes the homilies and statements from Bishop McElroy. **The Office for Ethnic and Intercultural Communities is ready to work with parishes and other faith organizations to tackle racism and to build more inclusive communities.** For more information contact Charlotte Fajardo, coordinator, at cfajardo@sdatholic.org.

Diocese of San Diego
“My Church, My Story” - Virtual Community Forum
Overcoming Racism: Listening, Dialogue, Action
August 2020

Opening Report: *Working Together to Overcome Racism*

Background

Vicar General Father Michael Pham, who leads the [Office](#) for Ethnic and Intercultural Communities, formed a Cultural Competencies committee in early 2019. He did so in response to U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) pastoral letter on racism "[Open Wide Our Hearts](#)" (November 2018), and its pastoral priority to build intercultural competencies among diocesan clergy, leaders, and lay ministries.

The committee's main goal was to design a session for clergy and diocesan ministries to enhance their intercultural competency skills. However, the committee changed this focus in May 2020 after George Floyd was killed, sparking the largest [movement](#) in U.S. history, once more bringing racism to the forefront of society at large.

Bishop Robert W. McElroy issued a [statement](#), "Finding Grace Within Our Republic of Suffering," in response to this death, the massive protests and the underlying systemic racism towards African Americans.

"The only authentic moral response to this moment in our nation's history is a sustained conversion of heart and soul to genuinely comprehend the overwhelming evil of racism in our society, and to refuse to rest until we have rooted it out," the Bishop said.

As followers of Jesus Christ, who are called to love one another, we were compelled to act.

The committee decided to organize a three-part virtual forum in August, named "[My Church, My Story.](#)" to raise awareness of racism in the Church, to identify ways to root it out, and to strengthen diversity and inclusion in parishes. Each session featured a speaker, who shared his or her experience, followed by small group discussions.

An average 100 participants attended each session, individuals who came ready to "listen, dialogue, and act." They included African Americans, Africans, Anglos, Asians and Hispanics, who came from 35 parishes in the diocese, plus several people from outside of San Diego County. Twenty volunteers from 10 parishes led the small-group breakout sessions.

This forum provided our Catholic faithful a safe space to have an open, honest dialogue and to propose ways that individuals, parishes, and the Church itself could combat racism.

The participants appreciated the opportunity to discuss this issue with a diverse group of faithful. Most importantly, they expressed a desire to continue this dialogue, to "get to know one another," and to intentionally work to end racism and to create more inclusive parish communities.

The leadership of the Church in this country has in recent years acknowledged its role and complicity in perpetuating individual and systematic racism.

“We, the Catholic bishops in the United States, acknowledge the many times the Church has failed to live as Christ taught -- to love our brothers and sisters. Acts of racism have been committed by leaders and members of the Catholic Church -- by bishops, clergy, religious, and laity -- and her institutions. We express deep sorrow and regret for them. We also acknowledge those instances when we have not done enough or stood by silently when grave acts of injustice were committed,” according to [“Open Wide Our Hearts.”](#)

For many participants, learning about the racist acts perpetrated on fellow Catholics was both surprising and disturbing. Participants who have been the victims of racist acts expressed cautious optimism that “real change” may happen this time.

Before proceeding, it is important to note that the diocese has demonstrated a commitment to inclusion and diversity, particularly in its leadership ranks. A majority of the directors and associate directors of the diocese’s pastoral offices represent a variety of cultures, including the Vicar General, Vice Moderator of the Curia and the Chancellor.

For nearly five decades, the diocese has engaged Catholics of ethnic groups in a variety of ways. The diocese founded the Centro Padre Hildago in 1972 to train Hispanics to lead ministries in their parishes, and established the Commission for Spanish-Speaking Catholics in 1991. It organized the Diocesan Commission for African American Catholics in the mid-1970s, one of several commissions comprised of cultural communities. In 1990, the diocese established the Office for Ethnic Affairs, which over the years evolved into the Office for Cultural Diversity and in 2017, the Office for Ethnic and Intercultural Communities.

This office organized in 2018 a diocesan-wide Pentecost Mass and Festival, celebrating the richness of the ethnic and cultural traditions of the peoples of the diocese. A total of 16 Catholic communities with roots from Africa to Vietnam to Europe to the Americas were represented, and around 1,400 faithful attended. In 2019, a total of 26 Catholic communities were represented with more than 2,300 attending. This year, though the pandemic forced the cancellation of many events, the cultural leaders persevered, and organized an online Pentecost Mass viewed by almost 5,000.

The diocese has not been alone in these efforts. Many parishes have invested significant resources to serve Hispanics and other ethnic groups by developing Masses, formation classes and other programming in Spanish and other languages.

The diocese and parishes could do much more, however, as the voices convened in the series reveal. The recommendations included in this report call for actions by the Bishop, priests, parish leadership and individuals.

This committee recognizes that the past eight months have been extraordinarily difficult for everyone, with challenges continuing for the foreseeable future. Many priests are struggling to adjust every aspect of parish life, with fewer resources, amid the worst health and economic crises in memory.

These are difficult times, but they also call for new ways of thinking and of being Church. In his comments to the third session in this series, Bishop McElroy told the participants, “Catholic social teaching tells us that painful moments can be wonderful moments of renewal. But they are hard.”

The intent of this report is not to assign blame to anyone, but rather to serve as a call to action, identifying areas that need urgent attention and proposing strategies.

The report presents recommendations for action to begin to reverse the evil of racism in our lives and in our world. These were drawn from the issues raised in the initial three sessions and during committee dialogue. The Appendix is a summary of what the participants shared during the initial three sessions, and their recommendations for individual, parish, and community transformation.

The committee presented another forum, focused on the Latino experience, held over two nights, Sept. 30 and Oct. 7. A third forum, to be focused on Native Americans, is scheduled for the end of October. The findings of those sessions will be added to this report after they are held. In fact, we plan to provide regular updates as this urgent work.

Recommendations

- A. **Create a diocese-wide goal, and a social justice ethos statement**, that each addresses racism in the Church. This goal and statement could be embedded in all diocese and parish education, engagement, leadership and communication platforms.
 1. **Goal:** *Eliminate racism in the Church and create a more welcoming, inclusive Church and society via listening, dialogue, and action.*
 2. **Commitment (Transformation):** *Develop a social justice ethos statement that reflects the Church's fundamental commitment to peace, to the poor, to social justice, and to eliminate racism and foster inclusion.*

- B. **Develop educational programs:** Most people are ignorant about the impact of racism on other ethnic groups, due to their limited knowledge of, and limited interaction with, those groups.
 1. Define the vocabulary that is used in these programs, e.g.:
 - a. Racism
 - b. Diversity/Inclusion
 - c. Intercultural/multicultural
 2. Identify and address “microaggressions” -- The most common behaviors that people engage in; identify strategies to eliminate them in the Church and in society.
 - a. Create a handout of examples of microaggressions - from Asians, Anglos, African American, Latinos and Native Americans - to prevent these subtle, covert indignities.
 - b. Incorporate this information into educational programs.
 3. Colorism: Create an awareness of internalized racism and incorporate this information into educational programs.
 4. Develop a historical overview of injustices (e.g., policies, processes, attitudes) inflicted upon marginalized groups by the Catholic Church, and develop strategies to address them.

5. Read and study existing documents (e.g., letters, homilies) issued by the Diocese, the USCCB and papacy on racism and social Justice. Cite these documents as the rationale to develop diocesan and parish action plans.
6. Raise awareness of Catholic Social Teaching and its foundational call to create and foster a just, equitable world for all.

C. Develop strategies for intercultural engagement

1. Individual

- a. Be part of the solution. Become aware of, and understand, that there is a racism problem (individual and structural).
- b. Make an individual commitment to eliminate racism and develop a personal action plan to support the parish effort.
- c. Strive for a conversion of the heart every day; strive to see every person as sacred and as a child of God; and learn more about other cultures, especially those represented in the parish and local community.
- d. Support these efforts through individual actions. Examples include getting involved in groups with diverse people; participating in anti-bias training at work and then applying those principles in daily and parish life; reaching out and welcoming new people to the parish, neighborhood and local community.

Racist beliefs are learned at home. Those parishioners who are parents should intentionally teach their children that our faith calls on everyone to love their neighbor and that every person has dignity, regardless of skin color or place of origin, and to model those beliefs when interacting with others in their parish and beyond.

2. Parish level

- a. Parish Councils (sometimes called Pastoral Councils) should assume ownership of the theme of creating a more inclusive parish community. All parish ministries, and all members of the parish, must be involved in this effort. It should be made clear that this is a long-term commitment to building up the parish and the Church, not a “fad” in response to sensational headlines.
 - 1) Provide educational resources for Parish Councils to learn how to begin the process of creating a more inclusive parish community.
 - 2) Use these resources to create a process to educate all parishioners.
- b. Parish leadership
 - 1) Develop a parish “pastoral plan” to establish annual priorities, that will include anti-racism efforts, diversity training, and inclusion strategies in its goals.
 - 2) Examine how parish equity, inclusion and diverse communities are incorporated into the essential elements of parish life: evangelization, worship, the Word, service, community, stewardship and leadership.
 - 3) Ensure inclusion and participation of different cultures in every aspect of parish life.

- 4) Participate in inclusion and diversity training programs.
 - 5) Each parish leadership team can create strategies/programs to help parishioners understand these issues, and create action plans to address these challenges.
 - 6) Be more hands-on with parish ministries (attend meetings, listen to concerns and interests, and be informed about and recognize their activities and accomplishments).
 - 7) Engage with all fellow parishioners before and after Masses.
3. Diocesan initiatives
- a. Write a pastoral letter to be read at all Masses. This letter could reflect the Bishop's recent homilies and the USCCB statements on racism in the Church and in society. In addition, pastors would be invited to share it electronically with their communities.
 - b. Establish clear expectations for priests to actively support and demonstrate inclusivity in their parishes as the core message of love conveyed by Jesus Christ.
 - 1) Create a series of training experiences and tools to help all priests develop their knowledge and skills, so that their values and actions are more consonant with the Gospel message of love.
 - 2) Encourage every pastor to initiate a "cultural diversity" and/or "social justice" council in their parish – to address the issues noted in this report. These efforts should involve all cultural communities in each parish.
 - c. Create a diocesan intercultural "best practices" online resource page, so parishes can learn from one another.
 - d. Develop an intercultural "newsletter" to share information about upcoming intercultural events and celebrations in the Diocese.
 - e. Identify diocesan "cultural competencies" as the foundation of programs designed to train the clergy and laity on how to prevent, respond to and address issues of racism in the diocese and in local communities, and to build inclusive parish communities.
 - f. Provide additional "cultural awareness development" and "combatting racism" workshops and series. Such programs will foster a diocese-wide commitment among people who can learn from one another and develop new methods to create a more welcoming and inclusive Church.
 - g. Expand the mission of the Office of Ethnic and Intercultural Communities to include providing the leadership, training programs and consultation with diocesan partners on strategies and programs to address racism.
 - 1) Provide the resources necessary to address these additional efforts.
 - h. Review all ministry offices in the Diocese to identify which programs and services need to be modified to ensure inclusivity in the Church and society. (The commitment to eliminate racism and create a more welcoming and inclusive Church should not be the purview of only one office. All ministries in the diocese must support this commitment.)
 - 1) Examine the mission and goals of each ministry to assess how they might be enhanced to better support the efforts to eliminate racism in the Church and in the diocese.

- i. Ensure that the diocesan annual parish census is a priority and that it provides accurate ethnic/cultural demographic information about parish families.
 - 1) The diocese may want to consider conducting an initial demographic survey of the diocese before the next census to ascertain which demographic communities are represented in each parish in the diocese.
 - 2) Each parish will be responsible to provide updated demographic data in subsequent years.
 - j. Examine how the Office of Communications can support efforts to tackle racism, particularly using digital platforms. Expanded Communication support can play an important role in developing a more diverse and inclusive Church, e.g., by sharing information and success stories in a variety of media; improving web and social media presence for sharing; and by collecting and sharing resources from within the diocese and from national sources. Provide the additional resources necessary for this effort.
4. Catholic schools and colleges/universities
- a. Through the Diocesan Office for Schools, and in collaboration with Catholic colleges/universities, review the curriculum, campus culture, student life, faculty and staff, institutional leadership, service (on and off campus), policies and practices of each of those educational sectors to address all forms of racism and to build more diverse, welcoming and inclusive educational institutions.
5. Inter-parish and in the community
- a. Collaborate with other diocesan parishes to bring people together. Examples include choir/music exchanges, diverse priest homily exchanges, parishioner visits to other parishes, creating sister-parish collaborations, and a diocese newsletter on intercultural events and programs.
 - b. In partnership with another parish and/or a community partner, each parish could identify (at least) one local priority issue of racism, equity and inclusion, and develop an action plan to resolve it to create a stronger and more just community.
 - c. Community outreach efforts are encouraged to also address the essential elements of parish life of Evangelization, Service and Leadership.
6. Intercultural engagement strategies should be directed to the laity (e.g., parishioners, ministry teams), religious sisters/brothers, youth and young adult youth, Catholic schools (administrators and teachers) and Catholic colleges/ universities); fraternal organizations: (e.g., Knights of Columbus, Knights and Ladies of Peter Claver); and the clergy (e.g., priests, deacons, seminarians).
7. Engage young adults and youth in addressing and implementing these recommendations. Many of these individuals view the world through a more accepting and welcoming intercultural lens. And many of them identify with their multi-cultural heritage. These attitudes could be useful in efforts to root out racism.
- a. Young people are the future of the Church, so it is vital that they play an important role in creating a more diverse, welcoming, inclusive and revitalized Catholic Church.

Conclusion

In the forum discussions, people spoke about how critically important it is to address racism in each of us, in our society, and in our Church, and to do so with a sense of urgency. The history and legacy of racism continue to hurt African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanics/Latinos and many other cultural communities, compromising and destroying lives. We have not always been a welcoming Church, nor have we seriously examined how racism has prevented us from more fully achieving the full body of Christ that we aspire to be.

Bishop McElroy said that societal forces bearing down on our faithful mean that the diocese cannot continue doing its work as it has in previous decades.

“Because of these ruptures – the disruption of ecclesial life, the overpowering recognition that we do not live in a society of authentic solidarity, and the devastating assault that the pandemic has visited upon our sense and sources of security - the pastoral mission of the Diocese of San Diego in the coming months and years must not be one of recovery, but of transformation,” he said at the ordination [Mass](#) for Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano in July.

This series has enabled us to begin a key aspect of that transformation. We recognize that we are just scratching the surface of a deep-seated issue. The Office will continue to offer opportunities for listening and dialogue to guide our actions. The findings of these sessions will be shared with diocesan and parish leadership as additions and supplements to this report.

Not every action we take will be perfect, nor should we wait to find the perfect solution. What is important is action – as individuals, as Church and as a society.

Throughout the program, we believe we were influenced by the Holy Spirit to guide us on the path of inviting others into this conversation on racism. We are confident that if we make a genuine commitment to the effort to eliminate racism -- in our hearts, in our minds and in our actions; and in the systemic legacy structures and practices of our Church and our society -- the Holy Spirit will continue to guide our efforts to create a more just, inclusive and welcoming Church, society and world, as our faith calls us to do.

Let the journey begin.

Diocese of San Diego
“My Church, My Story” - Virtual Community Forum
Overcoming Racism: Listening, Dialogue, Action
August 2020

Appendix: Summary of Sessions

The following is a summary of what the participants shared during the initial three sessions, their recommendations for individual, parish, and community transformation.

Session 1 - Listening

This session focused on sharing personal experiences in the Catholic Church through the lens of racism while the others listened. The speaker, [Dr. Constance Carroll](#), the Chancellor of the San Diego Community College District, shared her journey as a Catholic. Dr. Carroll acknowledged that the Church has been working diligently to overcome its racist history, which dates back to the first bishop in the U.S., who was a slave owner.

“Today, we’re at a very difficult and important crossroads. Our challenge as Catholics is to listen carefully to understand the different cultures that other Catholics come from. And to work as hard as we can to bring our Church back to its original founding as a Church of love, as a Church of acceptance, a Church, as Jesus said, founded on the notion that we should all love each other,” she told the participants. “And I think this program tonight is a very important step in that direction.”

A representative sample of participant views:

- *Parish life and inclusivity.* Some have not experienced racism in their parishes . . . There is a longing for the various cultures to come together . . . Parishes may be diverse, yet segregated, since most groups stick together . . . Diversity is not witnessed in our predominantly “White” church . . . Are our parishes welcoming?
- *Racism.* The events of recent months have stirred painful memories for those victims of discrimination . . . A missed opportunity – many priests failed to use current events as a way to share the Gospel in homilies or prayers of the faithful . . . Most know very little about the history of Black Americans and their centuries of suffering.
- *Education.* Pastors must make it a priority to educate their parishioners on racial equity and justice . . . Link “what is happening” to parish religious studies programs and sacramental preparation.
- *Church role.* Society at large needs help from the Church to respond to and combat racism. But the Church needs to do a better job of leading from the front.
- *A time to act.* Each of us must accept the role we have played in perpetuating racism, consciously or unconsciously . . . Each person must educate themselves to be part of the solution.

Session 2 - Dialogue

Participants discussed the issues identified in the first session, potential solutions and obstacles to them. The featured speaker was [Deacon Marvin Threatt](#). His remarks addressed the obstacles he has encountered in his life and in his ministry. They inspired the small group dialogues that followed his talk, where individuals identified obstacles and suggested strategies to address those issues.

Key Take-Aways:

1. Many participants seem to not recognize racism in their local church, despite volunteering to work on this issue. Until all parishioners can see it clearly, it will be difficult to implement solutions.
2. It was useful for participants to hear where, how, and why racism exists. Sharing and listening to personal stories is an important beginning to authentic learning and growth.
3. The faithful want to engage in a conversation about race relations, particularly the experience of Black, Latino, Native American, and Asian peoples.

Obstacles

Cultural issues – One race may dominate in a parish; people are comfortable, may not reach out to others; in preserving their cultures and traditions, people may isolate themselves; individual and systemic racism against African Americans is not addressed in the Church.

Imbedded bias – Centuries of racism are imbedded in American culture, laws, and traditions; church practices, prejudging skin color, languages spoken; stressing differences instead of commonality.

Parish leadership – Many parish priests are not visible enough in the social justice movement; diversity is often not advocated, or represented in parish planning or other committees; newcomers feel unwelcomed, become invisible; long-time parishioners can act “exclusive”; some people fear the pastor and the Church hierarchy.

Interaction, resistance, relationships and language barriers – Language, bias, and cultural differences can lead to “separate” churches, lack of integration, and parishioners not getting to know each other; many just go to Mass and don’t take the time to try to build community; some are discouraged about their all-White parish not being open to diversity, nor to social justice initiatives.

Solutions

Educate parishioners – Learn about and understand different cultures through parish events; provide English- and Spanish-language classes, cultural diversity and social justice book clubs, and volunteer opportunities; examine and display culturally representative religious art.

Develop and attend cultural liturgies, events and programs – Offer multi-lingual and multicultural Masses on a regular basis, not just at Pentecost and special occasions; invite all parish races/cultures to come together to celebrate cultural pieties, e.g., Our Lady of Guadalupe celebration.

Commit to social justice issues – Develop liturgies and homilies that are tied to social justice issues; develop social justice classes for parishioners, and develop opportunities to gather and take action on issues like poverty and racism.

Create a more inclusive community – Develop regular integration activities outside of Mass, not just for special events; interact with different parish communities; utilize the hospitality ministry to foster a welcoming atmosphere; create opportunities for the ministries of different cultures to meet and work together; address the language barrier and accent issues – seek volunteer translators; provide technology-supported live translation; publish synopses of homilies in the bulletin and on parish

website. Parishes should ensure that their community members understand why integration is important to the parish, the Church and society at large.

Leadership in the parish and diocese – Pastors and parish leadership need to create and commit to a vision of unity in Christ; the tone starts at the top, i.e., pastors and bishops; communication is critical; create safe and supportive ways for the laity to speak up, especially if they do not have the opportunity to serve on their parish council.

Inter-parish collaboration (between parishes) – Visit other parishes whose cultural makeup is significantly different; provide opportunities for priest/celebrant/homilists to do “pulpit exchanges,” and partner with a sister-parish in the diocese; occasionally rotate choirs with other parishes; invite priests or deacons of different races from the parish’s dominant race group to celebrate Mass.

Diocesan efforts – Commit to eliminating racism and celebrating our diversity starting at the top – bishops, pastors, key leaders; create a diocesan-wide monthly “diversity” newsletter to share our cultural histories as they relate to our faith, sharing the diversity ratios within our parishes, and other pertinent diversity news; create a diocesan “music fest” where choirs perform for one another, and teach other choirs a song from their parish; share what’s working/not working at deanery meetings for priests to learn from each other (in person or via Zoom).

Session 3 - Action (*Call for Transformation*)

The third session focused on what we can begin to do as individuals and as a Church (at both the diocese and the parish level) to address racism and create a more inclusive and welcoming society.

The featured speaker was Dr. Lisa Petronis, who shared a video profile of Ruby Bridges, the first African American child to desegregate an all-white elementary school in New Orleans, and her own personal encounter with a young boy whose faith sustained him as he endured an extraordinarily tough life virtually on his own with his younger brother. She stressed that at the heart of both of these experiences was love, which can open our hearts and minds and change our practices to create a more just and welcoming world.

Key Take-Aways:

1. Small group participants identified strategies that parishioners can adopt to foster more inclusive personal lives, and ideas that parishes can implement to address racism and be more inclusive.
2. Given the complex nature of racism in our country and in the Church, participants suggested addressing this issue *from both top-down and bottom-up directions*.
 - a. The Bishop should encourage the priests in the diocese to actively support becoming a more inclusive Church. This would include linking their homilies and readings to social justice and current events, as well as to promoting inclusive parish efforts/activities. Participants believe the success of this effort starts at the top.
 - b. Participants suggested a number of “bottom up” actions that individuals can take to learn about racial justice and to better connect with people different from themselves. Participants also identified a number of strategies that would begin the process of change, and build more inclusive and welcoming communities in our parishes.

3. Program participants appreciated Bishop McElroy's visit and comments. They felt affirmed in what they were doing, and motivated to continue the effort to address racism in the Church.
4. They appreciated the leadership of Father Pham and the planning committee in developing and offering this series. They noted how important it is to engage more people in these conversations to bring about lasting change in the diocese.
 - a. Participants strongly support offering the "overcoming racism" series again in the diocese – to involve more people in this endeavor.
 - b. They support offering additional intercultural programs in the diocese and in parishes.

Specific suggestions from small group participants

What can individuals do to be more inclusive in their personal life?

1. Education is essential, both personal (knowledge) and self-reflection (attitudes of the heart, values, love of your neighbor).
2. Listen to others and seek to understand.
3. Interaction patterns need to change.
4. Outreach to diverse communities and invite those who have been excluded.
5. Cohesion is critical for people to act in ways that bring people together.

What can the diocese and parishes do to address racism and be more inclusive?

1. Leadership -- Both top-down leadership from the Bishop, pastors and priests, and bottom-up leadership from parishioners, parish councils and all parish ministries are essential to initiate and sustain change in the diocese, parishes and individuals.
2. Collaboration – This practice may prove to be effective in bringing people together in parishes and across the diocese. Examples include choir/music exchanges, diverse priest homily exchanges, parishioner visits to other parishes, creating sister-parish collaborations, a diocesan newsletter on intercultural events, programs, and resources.
3. Create an inclusive community -- Parishes are urged to examine existing structures, programs and events to assess how they might be modified to create a more inclusive parish community.
4. A "Culture and Diversity" Committee, and/or a Social Justice Committee would benefit every parish. These committees could spark parish intercultural and social justice efforts. All parish ministries should strive to create a more inclusive parish community.
5. Education for everyone in the parish is paramount. All staff and parishioners could benefit from learning more about the other cultures that exist in the parish and in the diocese.

Diocese of San Diego
“My Church, My Story” - Virtual Community Forum
Overcoming Racism: Listening, Dialogue, Action
August 2020

Appendix II: Forum Teams

Office of Ethnic and Intercultural Communities

Very Reverend Father Michael Pham
Charlotte Fajardo, Assistant to Vicar General
Alejandra Diaz, Administrative Assistant

Cultural Competencies Steering Committee

Semret Hailemariam, Eritrean Catholic Community
Jo Hart-Lloyd, Diocesan Commission for African
American Catholics
Margaret Marsh, Chinese Catholic Community
Jim Moore, Mission San Luis Rey
Patrizia Vigili, Italian Catholic Federation

Diocesan Communications

Aida Bustos, Associate Director
Will Cornejo, Web Development
Sherry Pinomaki (Pinomaki Design)
Bob Sly (Bigslly Media)

Facilitators

Dr. Ricardo Marquez
Dr. Lisa Petronis

Featured Speakers

Dr. Constance Carroll
Deacon Marvin Threatt
Dr. Lisa Petronis

Small Group Leaders & Notetakers

Kat Albrant, The Immaculata
Sam & Athena Besa, Our Lady of Mount Carmel
Anamaria Cabato, St. Rita Church
Margie Carroll, The Immaculata
Laura Chun, Mission San Luis Rey
Betty & Andy Domingo, Mission San Luis Rey
Maricruz Flores, Our Lady of Guadalupe
Yvonne & David Freeman, The Immaculata
Chris Gomez, The Immaculata
Marianne Grisez, St. Thomas Moore
Jo Hart-Lloyd, Christ the King
Noreen McInnes, The Immaculata
Jim Moore, Mission San Luis Rey
Rafael Quevedo, Holy Trinity
April & Rov Riel, Good Shepherd Parish
Kari-Lorraine Scott, St. Didacus
Art Teodocio, Our Lady of Mount Carmel
Sandy & Ray Trybus, Christ the King
Patrizia Vigili, Our Lady of the Rosary
Suzanne Woo, St. Rose of Lima
Amy Woods, Saint Gabriel