

## **Prayer: The Elimination of Racism**

### **Opening Song Suggestions**

"All Are Welcome" by Marty Haugen or "Wade in the Water"

### **Opening Prayer**

Good and gracious God, you invite us to recognize and reverence your divine image and likeness in our neighbor. Enable us to see the reality of racism and free us to challenge and uproot it from our society, our world and ourselves.

This we pray: AMEN

### **Introduction**

The face of racism looks different today from how it looked in the past. Overt racism is easily condemned, but the sin of racism is often with us in more subtle forms. This day we gather in the love of God and neighbor to examine four patterns of racism in our hearts, and our world systems. We beg for both forgiveness and conversion as we open our hearts and minds in communal prayer.

### **Pattern One: Spatial Racism**

Spatial Racism is the term given to patterns of metropolitan development in which the affluent create racially and economically segregated suburbs or gentrified areas of cities, leaving the economically poor - mainly African Americans, Hispanics and some newly arrived immigrants -- isolated in deteriorating areas of the cities and older suburbs.

The devastating impact of massive economic disparities between communities and of isolating people geographically according to race, religion, and class is well documented. Spatial racism creates a visible chasm between those who are rich and those who are poor, as well as between Caucasian people and people of color.

Let us pray as we reflect on some of the economic inequities that result from this form of racism. Those who live in the economically depressed areas:

- Lack decent affordable housing
- Lack adequate staff, faculty, buildings, and supplies for public schools
- Lack capital investment for business and commerce
- Have little or no opportunities for jobs near home and insufficient public transit to jobs in the suburbs.
- 59 % of the time African Americans seek to buy houses, they encounter discrimination.

Silence

Response: We beg for both forgiveness and conversion as we open our hearts and minds in communal prayer.

### **Pattern Two: Institutional Racism**

Institutional Racism is the term given to patterns of social and racial superiority that continue as long as no one challenges them. In this pattern of racism people who assume, consciously or unconsciously, that Caucasian people are superior create and sustain institutions that privilege people like themselves and habitually ignore the contributions of other peoples and cultures. White privilege often goes undetected because it has become internalized and integrated as part of one's worldview by custom, habit and tradition.

Let us pray as we reflect on some of the injustices resulting from this form of racism.

- Institutions that devalue the presence and contributions of people of color and celebrate only the contributions of Caucasians.
- Indifference to rates of violence against lives of Blacks, Hispanics, Asians and native peoples.
- A Disproportionate number of Blacks, Hispanics, Asians and Native Americans and economically poor are on death row.
- A 1992 study by the Federal Firearms and Drug Trafficking Charges found that the average sentence for Blacks was 49 times longer than for the Whites convicted of the same crimes.
- Health Insurance-- the uninsured rate for African Americans, Hispanics and Native Americans is more than one and a half times the rate for white Americans.
- In professional circles of politics, business, social groups, and religious entities, the official representatives are predominately white.

Silence

Response: We beg for both forgiveness and conversion as we open our hearts and minds in communal prayer.

### **Pattern Three: Environmental Racism**

Environmental Racism is a term given to the pattern of racism linking pollution and poverty. Caught in a spiral of poverty and environmental degradation, the poor and the powerless most directly bear the burden and suffer disproportionately from the harmful effects of pollution.

Let us pray as we reflect on some of the injustices resulting from this form of racism:

- Three out of five African Americans and Latino American live in communities with abandoned toxic waste sites.
- Forty-six percent of USA housing units for the economically poor, mostly people of color, are within a mile of factories that reported toxic emissions to the Environmental Protect Agency.

- African American children are five times more likely to be victims of lead poisoning than Caucasian children.
- Asthma and air pollution are linked. African American populations are concentrated in cities that failed the EPS ambient air quality standards. African Americans and Latinos are almost three times more likely than Caucasians to die from asthma.

Silence

Response: We beg for both forgiveness and conversion as we open our hearts and minds in communal prayer.

#### **Pattern Four: Individual Racism**

Individual Racism is the pattern that perpetuates itself when people grow up with a sense of white racial superiority, whether conscious or unconscious.

Let us pray as we reflect on the injustices of this form of racism:

- Recent crimes of racial hatred in the USA.
- Personal moments of racial stereotyping
- When I automatically award superior status to my own cultural group and inferior status to all those outside my comfort zone.

Silence

Response: We beg for both forgiveness and conversion as we open our hearts and minds in communal prayer.

#### **Gospel Reading: Mt. 22: 34-40 and Luke 10 : 25-27**

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with your entire mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it; you shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two great commandments."

#### **Communal Reflection Questions**

1. How can we reach out beyond our level of comfort to meet and learn about others, hear their stories and be open to their full humanity?
2. What kind of projects can we identify that bring together different individuals, schools, parishes, small groups and / or communities to work together on an issue?
3. What questions can we begin to ask and how can we examine the policies of our local, national and international community to make sure they do not discriminate against minorities and others that have not enjoyed full citizenship in some way?
4. How can we bring diversity and respect for others into our prayers, our worship celebrations and our holy days and holidays?

#### **Commitment to a particular action**

Let us affirm together:

- WE pledge to examine our own biases and positions of privilege through self-reflection, and earnestly work to resolve them.
- WE pledge to live by compassion and be consciously inclusive of all individuals.
- WE pledge to affirm the value of diversity.
- WE pledge to promote understanding, inclusion, and mutual respect, and thus build community within all races, ethnicities and cultures.
- WE pledge to transform our institutions into authentically anti-racist and anti-oppressive communities of action.
- WE pledge to advocate for justice, demand equal opportunity for all and so help create a beloved community for everyone to share.

### **Closing Prayer**

Good and gracious God,  
 Who loves and delights in all people,  
 we stand in awe before You,  
 knowing that the spark of life within each person on earth is the spark of your divine life.

Differences among cultures and races are multicolored manifestations of Your Light.

May our hearts and minds be open to celebrate similarities and differences among our sisters and brothers.

We place our hopes for racial harmony in our committed action and in Your Presence in our Neighbor.

May all peoples live in Peace.

AMEN.

### **Closing Song Suggestions**

"All are Welcome", Marty Haugen OR "This Little Light of Mine"

*Materials used with permission: NCCJ "Denouncing Racism - A Resource Guide of Faith-Based Principles," Center of Concern's Education for Justice Racism Unit.*