

Parish Bulletin Inserts

This page contains excerpts from *In God's Image*, Archbishop Harry Flynn's pastoral letter on racism. These quotations can be used for periodic inserts in parish bulletins.

[Racism] is a social evil in which we all share and from which we all suffer. If we are to grow spiritually as individuals and socially as a community, then we all need to do more to come to grips with the sin of racism in our own hearts and within the institutions that make up our church and our society.

Archbishop Harry Flynn, *In God's Image*, (Pastoral Letter on Racism)

If we are to follow the example of Jesus, then we must be keenly aware that every person is formed in the image and likeness of God. Every person must be treated with a deep reverence and respect. For we are all sons and daughters of the one God, in whose sacredness we share. God intends that we all live in harmony; that we practice a love that unites us and reflects our fundamental equality as human beings.

Archbishop Harry Flynn, *In God's Image*, (Pastoral Letter on Racism)

[Racism] mocks the words of Jesus: "Treat others the way you would have them treat you." Indeed, racism is more than a disregard for the words of Jesus; it is a denial of the truth of the dignity of each human being revealed by the mystery of the Incarnation.

U.S. Bishops, *Brothers and Sisters to Us*, 1979

Racism is a serious offense against God precisely because it violates the innate dignity of the human person. At its core racism is a failure to love our neighbor. Since we cannot claim to love God unless we love our neighbor, we can only be one with God if we reject racism and work aggressively to remove it from our personal lives, our church, and our society.

Archbishop Harry Flynn, *In God's Image*, (Pastoral Letter on Racism)

An appreciation of racial diversity begins with an understanding of how our own lives are affected by skin color and race. Each of us should examine how our thinking and our actions are influenced by the color of our skin. How has my skin color enhanced my life or hindered me, helped or prevented me from understanding people of other races? How can I enhance my own life by learning more about other races?

Archbishop John R. Roach, *Reviving the Common Good*, 1991

For our own spiritual development, it is important that each of us come to understand that loving only people who are just like ourselves, loving only those who share our own ethnic or cultural background does not adequately fulfill the challenge of the Gospel. All of us are called to develop a sense of solidarity with our neighbors who are racially and culturally distinct from us. In doing so, we begin to live out the unity in diversity that is reflected in the life of the Holy Trinity.

Archbishop Harry Flynn, *In God's Image*, (Pastoral Letter on Racism)

Responding to the sin of racism must begin with each of us examining our own selves on this subject. We need to be open to a change of heart. We should ask God's Spirit to remove from us all traces of racial prejudice. We should avoid racial stereotypes, slurs and jokes. We should correct any expressions or racist attitudes among family members, friends, and co-workers. We should seek opportunities to know and learn from people of other races.

Archbishop Harry Flynn, *In God's Image*, (Pastoral Letter on Racism)

In a profound sense, then, the Eucharist is always a sign and celebration that stands against racism and prejudice. It changes us and asks us to change the world so that racial tolerance and racial justice will grow.

Archbishop Harry Flynn, *In God's Image*, (Pastoral Letter on Racism)

In a special way the celebration of the Eucharist should be a sign of unity and an inspiration for the kind of welcoming communities that our parishes seek to become. For the Eucharist reflects the solidarity and human dignity to which Jesus Christ calls us. When we gather around the altar, we do so as brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of the one God. We are radically equal as we gather to receive the Body of Christ. And, as we receive Christ's Body, we become the Body of Christ, a body of disciples united in our commitment to love and justice. Moreover, when we leave the altar to go out into the world and to carry on our daily lives, we commit ourselves to transforming the world so that it becomes the Body of Christ, so that it reflects the love and justice that we celebrate around the altar.

Archbishop Harry Flynn, *In God's Image*, (Pastoral Letter on Racism)

I believe that our Church must strive to be a sacrament, a sign of love and racial justice. We must be a leaven in the wider society by demonstrating our appreciation of diversity, the welcoming nature of our community, and the firm commitment that we have to fight racism in all its forms. Our church must become an institution that is seen by people of color as a place where their concerns are heard and as a partner in their struggles to achieve racial justice.

Archbishop Harry Flynn, *In God's Image*, (Pastoral Letter on Racism)

Combating racism also means that we need to develop a healthy appreciation of racial diversity. We need to learn more about the rich contributions that can be made, and are being made to our society by diverse cultures. . . . These cultures make valuable contributions to the tapestry of our human family.

Archbishop Harry Flynn, *In God's Image*, (Pastoral Letter on Racism)

Our commitment to combat racism and promote racial diversity must also extend to the public arena. Both individually and collectively we need to resist the racism that we find embedded in the social, economic, political, and cultural institutions of our society, and we need to work for the transformation of these institutions.

Archbishop Harry Flynn, *In God's Image*, (Pastoral Letter on Racism)

In the same way that the Irish, Polish, German, and Scandinavian immigrants contributed to the strength and growth of our nation during the early part of the last century, so too do today's immigrants and different ethnic and racial groups make an invaluable contribution to our society and our culture. They bring gifts that make our society more diverse and more fully human. All of us, whatever our race or skin color, should make a special effort to recognize and applaud these diverse gifts and to integrate them into our church and into the mainstream of American society.

Archbishop Harry Flynn, *In God's Image*, (Pastoral Letter on Racism)

There is a tendency on the part of some people to say, "I am not prejudiced. I am not a racist. I did not cause or contribute to the racial injustices of the past. Therefore, I am not responsible for racism today. There is nothing I can do." This view is unfortunate and morally inadequate, because it fails to take into consideration the social nature of the sin of racism. It fails to see that racism is not merely a personal sin, but also a structural sin. It is a social reality for which all members of society are responsible.

Archbishop Harry Flynn, *In God's Image*, (Pastoral Letter on Racism)

The extreme disparities between the social and economic realities for whites and people of color pose a moral obligation for all of us. These disparities inhibit the common good. They prevent all of us from realizing the kind of human community that is necessary for our full human development and happiness. Therefore, joining together and working to undo these inequalities is both the right thing to do and the smart thing to do.

Archbishop Harry Flynn, *In God's Image*, (Pastoral Letter on Racism)

It is my invitation and fervent wish that every Catholic in the archdiocese will join me in making this local church the "salt and light" for the world through its efforts to fight racism and promote racial diversity and harmony. Let us make this church a place of welcoming and learning, a place of encounter and dialogue among peoples of all races and cultures. Let us make this church a clear sign to the world by speaking out against racism and by working to transform the institutions and structures in which racism is so deeply embedded.

Archbishop Harry Flynn, *In God's Image*, (Pastoral Letter on Racism)