

On Thursday, September 19, the priests and deacons of our Diocese along with Bishop Medley gathered for a quarterly presbyteral day. The topic was Racism and was presented by the Most Rev. Shelton J. Fabre the Bishop of Houma-Thibodaux in Louisiana. In November of 2018 The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) approved the document, Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love – A Pastoral Letter against Racism. This document was developed by the Committee on Cultural Diversity, a committee of the USCCB, chaired at the time by Bishop Shelton Fabre.

Since that presentation the issue of Racism has seemed to surround me. The book that we are reading in our Just Faith Small Group is “Just Mercy” a book about the racism found in prisons especially on Death Row. On NCR I listened to a program on discrimination of care received by black women before, during and after child birth. I do not know if it is a coincidence, a sign from God or maybe because of Bishop Fabre’s talk I am more attuned to the topic. Whatever the reason, let us look at the pastoral letter, Open Wide our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love. This is the Fourth Pastoral Letter written by the USCCB, the first being written in 1958. Over the years there have been many victories in the area of discrimination but unfortunately racism continues to have a strong voice in our country and culture. Over the years the face and language of racism may have changed but the fact of Racism remains the same. The bishops define Racism as 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. They go on to say that when this conviction or attitude leads individuals or groups to exclude, ridicule, mistreat, or unjustly discriminate against persons of the basis of their race or ethnicity it is sinful. The bishops set up their pastoral letter on the quote from the prophet

Micah: 6:8.

You have been told, O mortal, what is good, and what the LORD requires of you:

Only to do justice and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God.

Do Justice – for a nation to be just, it must be a society that recognizes and respects the legitimate rights of individuals and peoples. These rights precede any society because they flow from the dignity granted to each person as created by God.

Love Goodness – When we begin to separate people in our thoughts for unjust reasons, when we start to see some people as “them” and others as “us” we fail to love. Love compels us to resist racism courageously. It requires us to reach out to victims, to assist the conversion needed in those who still harbor racism, and to begin to change policies and structures that allow racism to persist.

Walk Humbly with God – 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. Racism is a moral problem that requires a moral remedy - a transformation of the human heart.

I encourage you to read the pastoral letter it is only 30 pages. You can download the pastoral letter at www.usccb.org or there are some copies at the entryways in church. If you would like a copy and cannot find one at the doorways call the parish office.

Fr. Larry McBride