

A Response to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail"
Christian Churches Together USA
Study Guide – Catholic Edition

Catholic audiences who wish to use this Study Guide for personal reflection and group discussion may find the following assistance for facilitators useful:

Sessions One and Three of the Study Guide pose questions that presume an understanding of the historical contexts. See the brief summaries below, regarding the Civil Rights era and Jewish community life under Roman rule at the time of Jesus Christ. Similarly, participants may benefit from a deeper understanding of Catholic teaching on this subject. Below are selected documents for further study and reflection.

Historical Background

For Session One – read historical summaries for two significant periods:

- African American Civil Rights Movement (1955 – 1968)
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African-American_Civil_Rights_Movement_\(1955%E2%80%931968\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African-American_Civil_Rights_Movement_(1955%E2%80%931968))

- African American Civil Rights Movement (1896 – 1954)
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African-American_Civil_Rights_Movement_\(1896%E2%80%931954\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African-American_Civil_Rights_Movement_(1896%E2%80%931954))

For Session Three – follow links below for insights into Jewish life at the time of Jesus:

Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. [Roman Rule: 63 BCE-313 CE](#), *Jewish Virtual Library*
Horsley, Richard. [Jews and Christians in a Roman World](#), *Archaeology Magazine*
Tabor, James. [The Jewish World of Jesus: An Overview](#), *www.UNCC.edu*

Reference Documents

On Racial Harmony: A Statement by the Administrative Board, National Catholic Welfare Conference, August 23, 1963 – *reaffirms the U.S. Catholic bishops' official position against racial discrimination and segregation documented in 1958 and 1943. Racial justice is a religious question; associated with papal encyclical Peace on Earth (Pacem in Terris) and principles of Catholic social teaching; encourages open, sincere and calm discussion of mutual problems and concerns; directs attention toward knowing and understanding one another.*

Brothers and Sisters to Us: U.S. Bishops Pastoral Letter on Racism in Our Day, 1979 – *clarifies the sinful nature of racism; acknowledges legal remedies of the civil rights era, recognizes continued need for personal and social transformation, and underscores the intrinsic relationship between racial and economic justice.*

What We Have Seen & Heard: A Pastoral Letter on Evangelization From the Black Bishops of the United States, September 9, 1984 – *a message to and for Catholics of African descent; Part One describes gifts and values that shape the spirituality of Black Catholics; Part Two outlines opportunities and practical considerations for evangelizing in the Black community.*

Reconciled Through Christ: On Reconciliation and Greater Collaboration Between Hispanic American Catholics and African American Catholics, February 1997 – *reissued online in September 2013, articulates common backgrounds, experiences, concerns and shared values; renews the invitation to build relationships across cultural lines through joint dialog and active collaboration.*

Love Thy Neighbor As Thyself: U.S. Catholic Bishops Speak Against Racism, January 1997 – June 2000 – *a compendium of articles authored by individual bishops about diverse approaches that dioceses are using to combat racism.*

Massingale, Bryan. *Racial Justice in the Catholic Church.* New York: Orbis Books, 2010 – the author, a diocesan priest and Associate Professor of Moral Theology at Marquette University examines the presence of racism in the United States; explores how Catholic social teaching has been used and not used to combat racism and promote reconciliation and justice.