

Fall/Winter 2018

# One Church Many Cultures

The Good News of Cultural Diversity

## INTERCULTURAL HOPE FROM THE SYNOD

by Paul Jarzembowski, Youth and Young Adult Ministries  
Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth



In October 2018, just over 350 delegates from around the world – bishops, ministry experts, and young adults – convened in Rome for a Synod on “Young People,

the Faith, and Vocational Discernment.” Synods, established in the wake of Vatican II, are international congresses of bishops to gather with the Holy Father to discuss and propose pastoral directions on particular topics pertinent of all the faithful.

In response to the postmodern realities that youth and young adults are increasingly disaffiliating from faith traditions and they are disconnecting from the vocational journey towards marriage or religious life, Pope Francis declared two years ago that the 2018 Synod would focus on young people.

“We walked together, with Peter’s successor, who confirmed us in faith,” noted the Synod Fathers in the *Synod Final Document*, “and there, we reinvigorated enthusiasm for our mission.

Although coming from very different cultural and ecclesial contexts and points of view, we have felt a spiritual harmony from the beginning, with a desire for dialogue and true empathy.” (no. 1)

As the Synod delegates listened to each other, they heard stories of young people from different cultural communities and perspectives. Those from the developed world listened to witness testimonies from those living in poverty or under persecution. Young adults in a variety of contexts explained how their engagement with the Church was connected to their lived experience: it was a refuge, a source of hope, an aid to those in need, and a constant presence in unstable societies.

“Many Synod Fathers from non-Western contexts pointed out that, in their own countries, globalization carries with it authentic forms of cultural colonization, which eradicate young people from the cultural and religious affiliations from which they come,” noted the *Synod Final Document* (no. 14). The Church, then, must stand in opposition to such trends. “Various interventions reported the need for the Church

to be courageously on their side and participate in the construction of alternatives that remove exclusion and marginalization, strengthening reception, accompaniment, and integration. This is why it is necessary to become aware of the indifference that

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open wide our hearts

### Bishops Issue Pastoral Letter Against Racism

“Love compels each of us to resist racism courageously. It requires us to reach out generously to the victims of this evil, to assist the conversion needed in those who still harbor racism, and to begin to change policies and structures that allow racism to persist”.

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marks the life of many Christians too, and to overcome it with the deepening of the social dimension of faith.” (no. 12)

These learnings impacted those who gathered daily in the Synod Hall, and as the summit came to a close, with an eye towards implementation on the local level, the delegates began to reflect on how these lessons applied to their own contexts.

“There was a deep appreciation of the global nature of our Church, with different challenges and priorities faced by young people in different regions and continents,” said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano of Bridgeport, in his report on the Synod to the U.S. Bishops in November 2018. “In light of this diversity, [we are called] to explore the notion of synodality at every level of Church life and to embrace a posture of ecclesial listening and docility before the promptings of the Holy Spirit in our midst.”

With that in mind, the Synod is renewing in the Church an understanding of the cultural diversity of younger generations. Having emerged from the Fifth National Encuentro and emboldened by the Synod’s recommendations on the global nature of faith, it is now increasingly evident to a growing number of church leaders that ministries with youth and young adults must reflect an intercultural approach, and cannot remain indifferent to the struggles faced by all races and cultural families.

The Synod Fathers knew that the young people themselves would need to become the protagonists of the faith if these changes and movements are to truly take shape. They said, “Numerous experiences of many parts of the world testify that young people know how to be pioneers of intercultural and interreligious dialogue from the perspective of peaceful coexistence.” (no. 45) In other words, the Church must make room for youth and young adults to lead. Bishop Caggiano echoed this, saying, “They wish to be protagonists in ministry, and they made it clear that they do not seek to be simply given token involvement” in forging the path forward in this country.

Of particular importance at the Synod was not just letting young people take the lead, but that those from the margins of society should be key among those new leaders. “For their part, migrants, opportunely accompanied, will be able to offer spiritual, pastoral, and missionary resources to the communities that welcome them. Of particular importance is their cultural and political commitment ...to fight against the spread of xenophobia, racism, and the refusal of migrants... (and) the fight against human trafficking.” (no. 147)

In so doing, the Synod noted, this “new form of interreligious and intercultural dialogue...contributes to freeing our societies from exclusion, extremism, fundamentalism, and even

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from manipulation of religion for sectarian or populist purposes. Witnesses to the Gospel, these young people with their peers become promoters of an inclusive citizenship of diversity and a socially responsible and constructive religious commitment to social ties and peace.” (no. 155)

Hope in a more Gospel-centered society, then, emerges from intercultural competency and dialogue. The Synod was not just a gathering to discuss youth and young adults and explore ministerial and vocational models, though it certainly did that very well. The Synod was a place to dream of a society in which the message of Christ was infused and integral to a new way of being.

The first step in the journey toward that dream begins in the simplest of places: when Catholics, young and old alike, begin to care for one another, in particular through intercultural-ly-competent listening and dialogue. The second step is that those simple moments can begin right now. +



# MUCH TO BE GRATEFUL FOR AND MUCH TO LOOK FORWARD TO

By: Mar Muñoz-Visoso, MTS, Executive Director

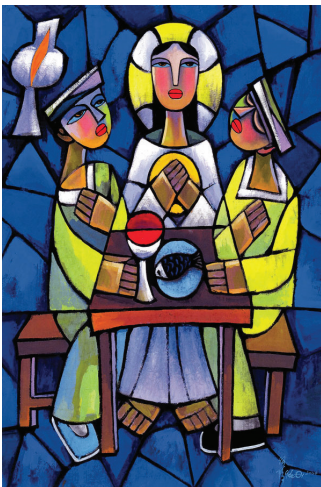


Looking back at 2018, I am amazed at the breadth of the work accomplished by the Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church, its five Subcommittees, and the Secretariat that supports them. The number, complexity and diversity of the communities under our mandate is breathtaking! And yet, despite some painful circumstances for the Church in the U.S. and abroad, we have always

found ways to advance the bishops' pastoral care and concern for all communities.

We provided feedback in numerous consultations by different committees of the Bishops' Conference. We collaborated with national Catholic and ecumenical organizations to promote intercultural competence for church ministers, staff and members to advance the Church's mission of evangelization and to combat racism and xenophobia wherever they may be found. And we work tirelessly so that all the different ethnic and cultural communities have a place at the table wherever the Church gathers.

However, committee members and staff of the Secretariat deserve special recognition for several important accomplishments this year. Under Cultural Diversity's leadership, three conference-wide projects came to fruition this year. They are the result of several years of hard work under different chairmanships. Bishops and staff did a spectacular job at collaborating and building consensus, and we will see the impact of their work for years to come.



First, we saw the approval in June of *Encountering Christ in Harmony: A Pastoral Response to our Asian and Pacific Island Brothers and Sisters*. This statement fulfilled a long-awaited hope of the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs, called for in the bishops' prior statement *Asian and Pacific Presence: Harmony in Faith* (2001). *Encountering Christ* advances the pastoral care of the growing number of Catholics of Asian and Pacific

Island heritage in the United States by offering a set of guidelines that dioceses and parish communities can use to create their own plans.

It wasn't easy. We were challenged at various points. But it was approved as a formal statement of the body of bishops by an almost unanimous vote. Special thanks to Bishop Oscar Solis (Salt Lake City), and Bishop Randy Calvo (Reno) for their guidance during their respective chairmanships, as well as to Sr. Myrna Tordillo, MSCS for her diligent work on this project.

Second, was the celebration of the *Fifth National Encuentro of Hispanic/Latino Ministry* in late September in North Texas. I can still feel the joy, the energy, and the commitment to the faith that the diocesan delegates and other participants demonstrated. We were all genuinely touched by the

Holy Spirit in so many ways at the National Encuentro! From the local to the national level, the process moved hundreds of thousands nationwide to reflect about their faith, and to reach out to those in the peripheries of church and society.

It also effected a pastoral awakening and conversion in many shepherds and other pastoral leaders. Some have described the process of the V Encuentro as a model of synodality, and a sure way to build the culture of encounter called forth by Pope Francis and prior pontiffs. As we move to the implementation phase, we must build on that experience to fulfill the V Encuentro's objective of identifying and developing many new leaders for the Church in the U.S.

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to all bishops who participated or sent delegations, but especially to Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller, MSpS (San Antonio) and Bishop Nelson Pérez (Cleveland), chairmen of the sponsoring Committee and Subcommittee respectively; also to Archbishop José H. Gomez (Los Angeles) as vice-president of the USCCB for his advocacy, and to all the "V Encuentro Bishops", including those who provided accompaniment of the national and regional teams. Particular thanks to Alejandro Aguilera-Titus, National Coordinator of the V Encuentro for his vision and tireless efforts; and to the USCCB staff and the Diocese of Ft. Worth for their assistance in planning the national event.



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## open wide our hearts

the enduring call to love *a pastoral letter against racism*

Finally, the USCCB General Assembly on November 14, 2018 promulgated *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love – A Pastoral Letter Against Racism*. At key moments in history the Catholic bishops of the United States have come together to express concern over a particular matter and to provide pastoral guidance to Catholics and people of good will. Bishop Shelton Fabre (Houma-Thibodaux) deserves special mention for his shepherding of this project on behalf of the Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church. We wish him all the best as he goes on now to supervise the implementation of the letter's vision as chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism. Special thanks to Donna Toliver-Grimes,

assistant director of African American Affairs, for her work and dedication, and kudos to all the USCCB committee chairmen, bishop liaisons, staff and consultants on this project (and there were many!) for their excellent feedback and contributions. Our labors were not in vain! I hope and pray that communities throughout the U.S. will be inspired by the pastoral and use it as a base text for their conversations and commitment to action on this relevant topic back home.

I am so blessed to work with such an amazing group of bishops and dedicated colleagues. Miracles happen when we open wide our hearts to God and to others, with full confidence in His Providence. While we mourn and grieve over reports of abuse by clergy and bishops, and demand accountability from the leaders of the Church, may we also be able to recognize and rejoice over the signs—big and small—that remind us that the Lord, Emmanuelle, continues to walk with us. ✚

**“ We instruct our priests, deacons, religious brothers and sisters, lay leaders, our parish staffs, and all the faithful to endeavor to be missionary disciples carrying forth the message of fraternal charity and human dignity. ”**

*Open Wide Our Hearts, page 27*

### CHAIRMAN'S REFLECTIONS

# IN PRAISE OF PASTORAL DE CONJUNTO

*By: Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller, M.Sp.S.*

*Archbishop of San Antonio*

*Outgoing Chairman, Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church*



In my final message to you as outgoing chairman of the USCCB Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church, I offer my prayers and best wishes to Bishop Nelson J. Pérez as he begins his term of service in this new role. He will be working with a great team and will find tremendous support.

The past three years have brought forward several significant accomplishments, namely the approval this spring at the General Assembly of *Encountering Christ in Harmony: A Pastoral Response to Our Asian and Pacific Island Brothers and Sisters*, as well as the passage November/Fall of the pastoral letter against racism, *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love*.

In addition to these important documents and plans of action, I believe that the V National Encuentro of Hispanic/Latino Ministry is being viewed as a watershed moment for the Catholic Church in the United States. This process is

empowering tens of thousands of the faithful to live their vocation more fully as joyful missionaries in their parishes and communities.

The gathering itself in Grapevine, TX was an illustration of *Pastoral de Conjunto*, the model of collaborative ministry I have been promoting in my Pastoral Center in San Antonio for years. More than 90 employees from the USCCB headquarters in Washington staffed the event at the Gaylord Texan Resort across all departments and agencies. I was edified to see this high new level of cooperation, and am optimistic that it will not only continue, but expand in scope.

It has been an honor to serve alongside the bishop committee members as well as the Secretariat on Cultural Diversity in the Church project and program coordinators, directors, specialists, and support staff. Lastly, I offer my profound gratitude to Mar Muñoz-Visoso, Executive Director of the Secretariat, for her truly dedicated service and the countless hours she devotes to ministry. Thank you for your leadership. God bless you all! ✚



# BISHOP NELSON J. PÉREZ TAKES OVER AS COMMITTEE CHAIR

*A message from Bishop Nelson J. Pérez, Bishop of Cleveland  
Incoming Chairman, Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church*

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings of joy and peace! Last year the bishops of the United States elected me to chair the Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church. The appointment took effect November 14, 2018 as the chairmanship of Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller, MSpS came to an end. I thank Archbishop Gustavo for his leadership over the last three years and for the confidence he put in me by appointing me as chair of the Subcommittee for Hispanic Affairs.

As a member of the Committee on Cultural Diversity for the past three years, I have seen the tremendous difference that this Committee, along with its corresponding Secretariat at the Bishop's Conference, makes. Whether it is promoting the pastoral care of migrants, refugees and people on the move, or looking at ways to fight poverty on Native reservations; promoting increased pastoral attention and leadership development among the growing number of Catholics of Asian and Pacific Island descent, and fighting racism, discrimination and xenophobia wherever we might find them; or convening a major church consultation and renewal process such as the V National Encuentro on Hispanic/Latino Ministry; the work of evangelization is never done! In fact, promoting intercultural competence and dialogue among all peoples in the Church—from the leadership to the last volunteer—is part of the Committee's permanent mandate and a necessity for the Church in this country and elsewhere, if it wants to carry out faithfully its missionary mandate.

That is why I am both excited and humbled to take on this responsibility, particularly at this time of the year in which the Church directs us to “trust and hope” (the words of my episcopal motto), in imitation of the prophets and the Virgin Mary, and to look towards the future with confidence. I promise to work alongside my brother bishops, the staff and all of you, so that the diversity of the body of Christ is represented at all levels and pastoral care and attention provided to every community. In turn, I ask you to pray for me, for the work of the Committee and its Subcommittees, and for the work of the Bishops' Conference. May God bless each and every one of you abundantly!



“Therefore, we must never limit our understanding of God's power to bring about the conversion of even those whose hearts appear completely frozen by the sin of racism.”

*Open Wide Our Hearts, page 29*

# ASIAN & PACIFIC ISLAND DAY

Mid-Atlantic Congress 2019  
Saturday, February 16, 2019  
8:30 AM-4:00 PM

Hilton Baltimore, 401 West Pratt Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201

## THEME

Encountering Christ in  
Harmony: Disciples in Mission

## FEATURED SPEAKERS

- Bishop Oscar A. Solis, D.D.
- Bishop Thanh Thai Nguyen
- Msgr. Joseph Trinh
- Fr. Ricky Manalo, CSP
- Fr. Linh Hoang, OFM
- Corinne Monogue
- Dr. Jem Sullivan

with panelists: Rod & Caryl  
Bustos, Dr. Young Hoang, & Sr.  
Akeneta Vulase, RA

## To register for API Day only

- [General registration info](#)- form, fee, and deadline
- [Limited scholarships available](#); applications accepted until Wednesday, January 16, 2019
- Reception and celebration with Bishop Solis and Bishop Nguyen

For more information on registration and scholarships, contact: Leticia Rivera at [LRivera@usccb.org](mailto:LRivera@usccb.org) or 202-541-3177  
Sr. Myrna Tordillo at [MTordillo@usccb.org](mailto:MTordillo@usccb.org)



Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church /  
Asian and Pacific Island Affairs

# ENCOUNTERING CHRIST IN HARMONY: A PASTORAL RESPONSE TO OUR ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLAND BROTHERS AND SISTERS

*Most Reverend Oscar Solis, D.D.*

*Bishop of Salt Lake City*

*Chairman, Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs*



Greetings of Christ's peace and love.

I wish to share with you the good news regarding the publication and distribution of the document

*Encountering Christ in Harmony: A Pastoral Response to Our Asian and Pacific Island Brothers and Sisters* which was approved by the body of bishops during the 2018 USCCB Spring Assembly in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

It is the first official document issued by the body of US bishops since 2001 that recognizes the growing Asian and Pacific Island population in the United States and clearly indicates an intentional pastoral outreach to advance the Church's mission of evangelization to these particular cultural communities. It is a response to Pope Francis' call to go to the peripheries to proclaim the Gospel but also to bring the peripheries for closer integration and fuller communion with the Church, the Body of Christ.

Our Asian and Pacific Island brothers and sisters are ready for their fuller and active engagement in the Church. However, as they share their rich cultural gifts of strong faith, cultural values and colorful traditions, their diversity also poses a challenge to the Church. The Pastoral Response, the result of a laborious and expansive in-depth study of Asian and Pacific Island Catholics in our country today, offers guidance, resources and a framework for dioceses and parishes to assist diocesan and parish leaders as well as the faithful so they can integrate the suggested approaches in their own pastoral plans or actions specific to the circumstances and needs of their local Asian and Pacific Island communities.

*Encountering Christ in Harmony* is very significant to the present mission of our Church as it presents a strong message of the collegial voice and intentional effort of the U.S. Catholic Bishops to provide the important pastoral outreach to the Asian and Pacific Island communities and to help them develop able leaders and

partners in evangelization as missionary disciples of Christ.

We are extremely grateful to the collaborative work of all the bishop members of our subcommittee, the cooperation from the consultants and Secretariat of Cultural Diversity staff, as well as the tremendous support from the standing Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church, Asian and Pacific Catholic leaders and many others who in various ways contributed in completing this document.

I seek your continued support for the concrete implementation of the Pastoral Response in all the dioceses and parishes throughout the nation. Let us join in prayers and in our efforts so that it will be an effective tool to build bridges in our communities and to promote unity in the midst of diversity. May this endeavor through the intercession of Our Blessed Mother Mary merit God's blessings and bring it to fruition.

Bishop Oscar A. Solis, D.D.

Bishop of Salt Lake City

Chairman, Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs



**“ Racism profoundly affects our culture, and it has no place in the Christian heart. This evil causes great harm to its victim, and it corrupts the souls of those who harbor racist or racist or prejudicial thoughts. ”**

*Open Wide Our Hearts, page 7*



# V ENCUENTRO

DISCÍPULOS MISIONEROS: TESTIGOS DEL AMOR DE DIOS

## HISPANIC AFFAIRS

# SYNOPSIS ON THE V NATIONAL ENCUENTRO

The V National Encuentro celebrated in Grapevine, TX was a moment of grace, a mountain-top ecclesial experience that marked the half way point of the V National Encuentro of Hispanic/Latino Ministry. Over 3,200 participants, including 124 bishops, 87 USCCB staff and 2,500 delegates representing more than 90% of the US dioceses, gathered at the four-day event designed as a process of celebration, dialogue, reflection, and pastoral discernment.

The tone of the entire event was joyful as delegates gratefully arrived, ready for a celebration after twenty months of mission and consultation. A sense of hope, reverence and love for the church and its shepherds was evident from beginning to end despite the current crisis, which was acknowledged and discussed at different points. Descriptions, such as: *Caricia de Dios* (God's touch of tenderness), moment of grace, light in the darkness, balm for the wound, rivers of joy and hope, were expressed by bishops and other Main-stage presenters as they tried to capture the mood and significance of the gathering.

The National Encuentro featured a video-recorded message from

Pope Francis on opening night and included lively liturgies with inspiring homilies and beautiful music over the following three days. There we also insightful presentations and conversations involving bishops, theologians and young adults on a variety of issues and topics. One of the highlights of the gathering was an evening designed for sharing a meal, open dialogue, prayer and praise between the bishops and more than 670 young adult delegates. Many participants expressed the sentiment that this intimate dialogue was authentic, insightful and prayerful, and that healing took place in the hearts and minds of bishops and young adults alike.

A unique feature of the event was the deliberative regional process that engaged the bishops and delegates in dialogue over the conclusions and recommendations of the consultation process, that culminated at the National Encuentro. They also reflected on 28 ministerial areas and identified specific recommendations for each one of them, with the assistance of USCCB staff, for development and implementation in the future. National leaders representing over 200 Catholic organizations also participated in the ministerial areas'

conversations. A sense of *fiesta* and the celebration of Hispanic/Latino culture also took center stage, and the dance floor, during the Saturday night banquet.

The V National Encuentro offered the participants on site, and thousands of others who followed the event via livestreaming or on EWTN, two very significant takeaways, among others. The first is that Hispanic/Latino Catholics are a blessing from God and a most important protagonist in the present and future life and mission of the Church in the United States. Secondly, the Church needs to invest in the leadership development and formation of Hispanics/Latinos, particularly young adults, so that they can be ready to serve all Catholics, and society, as joyful missionary disciples.

The participation of representatives from the Holy See, CELAM and the bishops' conferences of Canada and Mexico were an important component of the ecclesial nature of the V National Encuentro, and the desire to build bridges between the churches in the entire continent, in the spirit of the Continental Mission and Saint Pope John Paul II's call in *Ecclesia in America*.



“ We call on everyone, especially all Christians and those of other faith traditions, to help repair the breach caused by racism, which damages the human family.

*Open Wide Our Hearts, page 28*



# V ENCUESTRO- PRELIMINARY SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND INITIATIVES

## 1. Evaluation of National Encuentro

- a. As of October 18, 41% of the V Encuentro delegates and participants had responded to the evaluation survey, and 77% of the respondents completed it.
- b. 93% of the respondents agreed that the V Encuentro process has strengthened their ability to respond as missionary disciples to those in the peripheries.
- c. The highlight of the V National Encuentro most often mentioned by the responding delegates was the dinner / encounter of the young adults with the bishops.
- d. The highest ratings were consistently given to the Eucharistic Liturgies, with 84-90% of the respondents rating them as “Excellent”, followed closely by most of the Keynote presentations.
- e. In terms of the consultation process, the Saturday breakout sessions (Interregional and by Ministerial Area), the Friday evening plenary reporting session on regional discussion, and the Working Document received the highest ratings. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents rated them as “Excellent”.

## 2. What the process showed

- a. The need for a model of church that is more welcoming, missionary to the peripheries and builds community through ecclesial integration, not cultural assimilation.
- b. A great disposition on the part of thousands of Hispanic/Latino leaders to engage in formation and leadership development.
- c. An urgent need for the Church to invest in Hispanic/Latino emerging leaders, particularly young adults both new immigrants and U.S.-born.
- d. Identification of best practices in parish and diocesan ministry among Hispanics/Latinos.
- e. Increase of parish and diocesan interculturally competent staff and teachers in Catholic schools and seminaries.

## 3. Most Significant Recommendations

- a. Leadership development and formation of Hispanic young adults and those working with Hispanic youth and young adults, including second and third generations, and beyond.
- b. Parishes and ecclesial movements getting more involved and providing accompaniment to families, so that they can flourish in faith, education, health, economic development and civic responsibility.



- c. Renewed advocacy and solidarity efforts for new immigrants and their families suffering persecution, discrimination and separation.
- d. Promote a model of leadership and ministry based on an encounter with Christ, missionary discipleship and intercultural competency.
- e. Provide new pathways and methods for parents to be better formed, involved, and equipped with excellent materials to transmit the faith, including family-based catechesis with a strong scriptural foundation.
- f. Offer solid formation for all ages on the sacrament of marriage and family life.

## 4. Emerging National Initiatives

- a. Leadership development initiative for Hispanic young adults and those working with youth and young adults.
- b. Parish-based leadership and human development models and materials for families, with a strong biblical and evangelizing catechetical component that connects linguistically and culturally to the experience of the Hispanic / Latino community.
- c. Pastoral guidelines and best practices for parish and diocesan ministry among Hispanics/Latinos.

## 5. Timeline of Next Steps

- a. Production and publication of *The Proceedings and Conclusions of the V National Encuentro*, by the Spring 2019.
- b. Roll-out of *V Encuentro* proceedings and conclusions, recommendations and initiatives in the 14 Episcopal Regions and with *V Encuentro* partner organizations during the second half of 2019
- c. Diocesan trainings and *V Encuentro* strategic planning gatherings throughout 2020.
- d. Development, promotion, and implementation of national initiatives through 2019-2020.

*During the November 2018 plenary assembly, Most Reverend Joseph Kopacz, Bishop of Diocese of Jackson, consulted with the U.S. Bishops on the case to advance the cause for canonization of the Sr. Thea Bowman, F.S.P.A., Ph.D., Educator, Missionary Disciple, Advocate for Cultural Awareness and Racial Harmony Diocese of Jackson in Mississippi. The episcopal consultation is a step in the Catholic Church's process toward declaring a person a saint. The following are remarks on the merits of the case. The body of bishops overwhelmingly supported moving forward with the cause.*

## SISTER THEA BOWMAN

*Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration  
1937-1990*

*"We unite ourselves with Christ's redemptive work when we reconcile, when we make peace, when we share the good news that God is in our lives, when we reflect to our brothers and sisters God's healing, God's forgiveness, God's unconditional love."*

Sister Thea Bowman, F.S.P.A., shared these words a few weeks before dying of cancer in her home in Canton, Mississippi as part of a reflection on Holy Week, entitled, "Let Us Resolve to Make This Week A Holy One" in the Diocese of Jackson's newspaper, Mississippi Today. These would be the final public words of a religious woman who dedicated her life to spreading the joy of the Gospel and promoting cultural awareness and racial reconciliation.

A self-proclaimed, "old folks' child," Thea Bowman, was the only child born to middle-aged parents, Dr. Theon Bowman, a physician and Mary Esther Bowman, a teacher. At birth, she was given the name Bertha Elizabeth Bowman. She was born in 1937 and reared in Canton, Mississippi. As a child, she converted to Catholicism through the inspiration of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration and the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity who were her teachers and pastors at Holy Child Jesus Church and School in Canton. These religious communities nurtured her faith and greatly influenced her religious vocation.

Growing up, Thea listened and learned from the wisdom of the "old folks," the elders of her community. Ever precocious, she asked questions and gained insights on how her elders lived, thrived and survived. She learned from family members and those in her community coping mechanisms and survival skills. These skills proved essential as she navigated through the horrid experiences of blatant racism, segregation, inequality, and the struggle for Civil Rights in her native Mississippi. At an early age, Thea was exposed to the richness of her African-American culture and spirituality, most especially the history, stories, songs, prayers, customs and traditions. Moreover, she was cognizant that God loved and provided for the poor and the oppressed. Her

community instructed her, "If you get, give—if you learn, teach." These life lessons instilled in her an abiding love for God and to be charitable to toward those most in need.

For Thea Bowman, her conversion to Catholicism was rooted in what she witnessed: she was attracted to the Catholic Church by the example of how Catholics seemed to love and care for one another, most especially the poor and needy. For Thea, she was impressed by how Catholics put their faith into action. At the age of fifteen she told her parents and friends she wanted to join the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration and left the familiar Mississippi terrain to venture to the unfamiliar town of LaCrosse, Wisconsin where she would be the only African-American member of her religious community.

At her religious profession, she was given the name, "Sister Mary Thea" in honor of the Blessed Mother and her father, Theon. Her name in religious life, Thea, literally means "God." She was trained to become a teacher. She taught at all grade levels, eventually earning her doctorate and becoming a college professor of English and linguistics.

The turbulent 1960s was a period of transformation for a nation torn by racial strife and division. The United States was confronted by the quest for justice and racial equality for all Americans. The late 1960's was also a time of transformation for Sister Thea Bowman: both a spiritual and cultural awakening. The liturgical renewal of the Second Vatican Council encouraged Sister Thea to rediscover her African-American religious heritage and spirituality and to enter her beloved Church "fully functioning." She emphasized that cultural awareness had, as a prerequisite, intentional mutuality. She was eager to learn from other

cultures, but also wanted to share the abundance of her African-American culture and spirituality. Indeed, Sister Thea became a highly acclaimed evangelizer, teacher, writer, and singer sharing the joy of the Gospel and her rich cultural heritage throughout the nation.

Spurred by the need to return home to Canton to care for her aging parents, in 1978, Sister Thea, with the blessing, approval and permission of her superior and religious community, accepted an appointment by Bishop Joseph Bernard Brunini to direct the Office of Intercultural Affairs for the Diocese of Jackson. In this position Sister Thea continued to assail racial prejudice and promote cultural awareness and sensitivity. She was a founding faculty member of the Institute for Black Catholic Studies at Xavier University in New Orleans. With the full support of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, Sister Thea remained then and remains still a member in good standing in her religious community.

In 1984, Sister Thea faced devastating challenges: both her parents died, and she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Her friends and students encouraged her to choose life. Sister Thea vowed to “live until I die” and continued her rigorous schedule of speaking engagements. Even when it became increasingly painful and difficult to travel as the cancer metastasized to her bones, she was undeterred from witnessing and sharing her boundless love for God and the joy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Donned in her customary African garb, Sister Thea would arrive in a wheel chair with no hair (due to the chemotherapy treatments) but always with her a joyful disposition and pleasant smile. She did not let her wheel chair, or the deterioration of her body keep her from one unprecedented event – an opportunity to address the U.S. Bishops at their annual June meeting held in 1989 at Seton Hall University in East Orange, NJ. Sister Thea

spoke to the bishops as a sister having a “heart to heart” conversation with her brothers.

This well-crafted, yet at times, quite spontaneous message spoke of the Church as her “home,” as her “family of families” and as her trying to find her way “home.” She explained what it meant to be African-American and Catholic. She enlightened the bishops on African-American history and spirituality.



**Sister Thea Bowman, F.S.P.A., Ph.D.**

*Educator, Missionary Disciple,  
Advocate for Cultural Awareness and Racial Harmony  
Diocese of Jackson in Mississippi*

Sister Thea urged the bishops to continue to evangelize the African-American community, to promote inclusivity and full participation of African-Americans within Church leadership, and to understand the necessity and value of Catholic schools in the African-American community. And when she was through she invited the bishops to move together, cross arms and sing with her, “We Shall Overcome.” She seemingly touched the hearts of the bishops as evidenced by their thunderous applause and tears flowing from their eyes.

When asked by her dear friend and homilist for her funeral, Father John Ford, S.T. what to say at her funeral, Sister Thea responded: “Tell them what Sojourner Truth said about her eventual death, ‘I’m not going to die. I’m going home like a shooting star.’” And so she did, peacefully at five o’clock in the morning of

March 30, 1990 in the home where she was reared in Canton, MS. Sister Thea said that she wanted inscribed on her tombstone the simple, yet profound words: “She tried.” “I want people to remember that I tried to love the Lord and that I tried to love them...” She was buried beside her parents and an uncle at the Elmwood cemetery in Memphis, Tennessee.

Sister Thea Bowman’s life was always one of Gospel joy, enduring faith, and persevering prayer even in the midst of racial prejudice, cultural insensitivity, and debilitating illness. Her personal holiness witnessed to the faith and endurance of her ancestors, the hope expressed in the Spirituals, compassion for the poor and

*continued on page 12*

*continued from page 11*

marginalized, her devotion to the Eucharist, and the radical love embodied by St. Francis of Assisi. Asked how she made sense of suffering, she answered, “I don’t make sense of suffering. I try to make sense of life...I try each day to see God’s will...”

Her life epitomized the words of Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium*: *Indeed, those who enjoy life most are those who leave security on the shore and become excited by the mission of communicating life to others.* [10] Sister Thea’s life is also a radiant example of Pope Francis’ *Gaudete Et Exsultate*. The Holy Father writes, *Holiness is boldness, an impulse to evangelize and to leave your mark in this world.* [129] *...Your identification with Christ and his will involves a commitment to build with him that kingdom of love, justice and universal peace.* [25]

During her short lifetime (52 years), many people considered her a religious Sister undeniably close to God and

who lovingly invited others to encounter the presence of God in their lives. She is acclaimed a “holy woman” in the hearts of those who knew and loved her and continue to seek her intercession for guidance and healing.

Today across the United States there are schools; an education foundation to assist needy students attend Catholic universities; housing units for the poor and elderly, and a health clinic for the marginalized that are named in her honor. Books, articles, catechetical resources, visual media productions, and a stage play have been written or created documenting her exemplary life, spirituality, and ministry; prayer cards, works of art, statues, and stained-glass windows bear her image all attesting to Sister Thea’s profound spiritual impact and example of holiness for the faithful. ✚



“Overcoming racism is a demand of justice, but because Christian love transcends justice, the end of racism will mean that our community will bear fruit beyond simply the fair treatment of all.”

*Open Wide Our Hearts, page 18*

# COMBATting RACISM WITH A CALL TO LOVE WITH OPEN HEARTS

By: Danielle M. Brown, Esq.

*US Conference of Catholic Bishops Associate Director, Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism*



In the recently approved Pastoral Letter Against Racism, *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love*, the U.S. Catholic bishops acknowledge racism's persistence in society. They teach that through His Cross and Resurrection, Christ united all to our common heavenly Father. Christ's

victory through the cross is complete but the world is still affected by sin and death. Particularly, racist acts are a failure to acknowledge another person as a brother or sister created in the image of God. In the letter, the bishops discuss racism and systems of racism, identify groups particularly impacted by both and call all to action and conversion.

We learn that the rights of all flow from being created by God. To ignore that fact and to unjustly discriminate against another because of race or ethnicity, is sinful and a violation of justice. Our Triune God is a communion of persons. Because we are made in his image, we know we are also made for communion, where our love for God flows into love of neighbor.

Still, rising societal racial and ethnic hostility, largely the catalyst for the letter, is indicated by the re-appearance of nooses and swastikas in public spaces. Extreme nationalist ideologies feed the public discourse with xenophobic rhetoric, instigating fears against foreigners, immigrants, and refugees. The bishops specifically reject organizations formed out of racist ideology calling participation in them or fostering them sinful.

The letter explores racism's manifestation in the sin of omission when individuals, communities, and even churches fail to act or speak against racial injustice. It examines institutional racism, the result of practices or traditions that treat groups of people unjustly, writing that the cumulative effects of personal sins have led to

social structures of injustice and violence that make us all accomplices to racism. Notably, the Bishops reference the disproportionate killing of unarmed black men as a product of such structures recognizing that for people of color interactions with law enforcement are often fraught with fear.

While the civil rights movement yielded many positive gains, the Bishops express how racism continually impacts our culture. They conclude that our progress against racism in recent decades does not fully meet the standard of justice, but that there is reason to hope.

We are reminded that Christ supplies the strength and grace necessary for genuine personal conversion which is needed to reform our churches, civil and social institutions, and society. The invitation to conversion is for all of us. We are encouraged to acknowledge our failures and restore right relations with others, humbly asking for the grace to overcome racism.

Though many ethnic groups are past and current targets of prejudice in this country, the historical and contemporary experiences of Native Americans, African Americans, and Hispanic Americans are emphasized.

Native Americans, treated heinously during American colonization and expansion, experienced deep wounds that largely remain unhealed. The effects remain visible in their disproportionate poverty, unemployment, inadequate health care, poor schools, the exploitation of natural resources, and disputes over land ownership. Missionaries who defended and ministered to Native Americans and those Native Americans who willingly accepted the Gospel are profiled.

The bishops recount the mass kidnapping of Africans and their savage enslavement in this country. Post slavery, newly freed black people encountered aggression and violence, living in constant fear. Attempts at socioeconomic advancements were stymied, and participation in the political process denied. The letter notes that contemporary poverty in these communities often emanate from racist policies continually impeding access to affordable housing, meaningful work, adequate education, and social mobility.

*continued on page 14*

Historically, Hispanics encountered—and still encounter—similar patterns of discrimination, presently being the major target of immigration raids and mass deportation, often assumed to be in this country illegally.

Love compels courageous confrontation of racism which is a moral problem requiring a moral remedy: human hearts transformed by the Lord who heals the wounds within and between us.

Significantly, the bishops lament Pope Nicholas V's officially permitting kings to buy and sell Africans in 1452, which laid the groundwork for the African slave trade. They lament the subsequent failure of Catholic leaders to formally oppose slavery, and that some even owned enslaved people. They acknowledge that sons and daughters of the Church have committed acts of racism and have failed to live as Christ taught when they stood silently or did not do enough in the face of grave injustice. The bishops express sincere sorrow and regret, asking for "forgiveness from all who have been harmed by these sins, in the past or in the present." To

promote justice, the bishops formed the Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism, tasked with the implementation of the pastoral letter. The Committee, already at work holding listening sessions and providing resources for parishes, must facilitate ongoing national dialogues and foster reconciliation.

Dioceses must aid communities of color with struggling schools and parishes. Catechetical training resources, youth ministry programs, support for families, seniors, and former inmates are all needed. The bishops call each other to self-education through cultural and learning institution visits and presenting and preaching the entire Christian doctrine on racism. Catholic schools, seminaries, and publishers are called to develop antiracism curricula. Further, the bishops recommit to promoting all vocations in communities of color. Ending in prayer for our Blessed Mother's intercession, racism is named a life issue because it attacks a human life. Racism is a perversion of God's will for all of us, but through Him we shall overcome. ✚



open wide our hearts

**Official Prayer, Open Wide Our Hearts, The Enduring Call to Love  
A Pastoral Letter Against Racism**

As in all things, we turn to prayer, asking Our Blessed Mother to intercede on our behalf:

Mary, friend and mother to all, through your Son,  
God has found a way to unite himself to every human being,  
called to be one people, sisters and brothers to each other.

We ask for your help in calling on your Son,  
seeking forgiveness for the times when we have failed to love and respect one another.

We ask for your help in obtaining from your Son the grace we need  
to overcome the evil of racism and to build a just society.

We ask for your help in following your Son, so that prejudice and animosity will no longer  
infect our minds or hearts but will be replaced with a love that respects  
the dignity of each person.

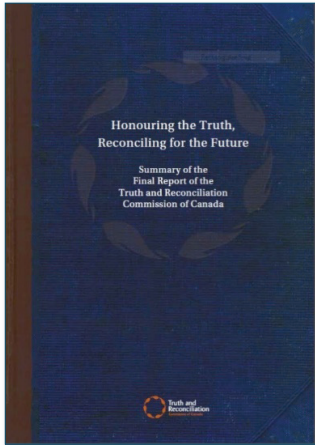
Mother of the Church, the Spirit of your Son Jesus warms our hearts: pray for us.

**" Racism profoundly affects our culture, and it has no place in the Christian heart. This evil causes great harm to its victim, and it corrupts the souls of those who harbor racist or racist or prejudicial thoughts. "**

*Open Wide Our Hearts, page 7*

# AN EXAMPLE OF HEALING FROM RACISM IN THE NATIVE COMMUNITY

*By: Fr. Michael Carson  
US Conference of Catholic Bishops  
Assistant Director, Native American Catholics*



In the 18th and 19th Century, many Natives were forced to attend Indian boarding schools in Canada. In many of these places there was a legacy of physical and sexual abuse and neglect. They were also places where there was an attempt to oppress and eliminate Native cultures and languages. Unfortunately, the Catholic Church shared in this some of this dark legacy.

The Canadian Government developed The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to listen to the stories and experiences of those who attended the Canadian boarding schools. The TRC was in operation from 2011 to 2015. Its scope was the Boarding School Period from 1887 to 1976. Throughout Canada they held listening sessions, took down evidence and developed a report categorizing the stories of abuse

and survival of the First Peoples of Canada.

A major component of cooperation with the TRC was the Canadian Conference of Bishops. It was a time of reaching out and healing the wounds that created a rift with the Native Community. This process of healing takes more than just one report but is an ongoing process of listening and acting to restore trust from a period of the perpetuation of pain and sorrow.

In the TRC's recommendations, they stressed the need to educate at all levels about the Boarding School Period and about how schools teach about the First Peoples in Canada. This has led to a process of healing that can be seen as a framework for counteracting the sin of racism and abuses.



*" The effects of this evil [racism] remains visible in the great difficulties experienced by Native American communities today. Poverty, unemployment, inadequate health care, poor schools, the exploitation of natural resources, and disputes over land ownership are all factors that cannot, and should not, be ignored. "*

*Open Wide Our Hearts, page 12*

SPOTLIGHT:  
THE HAITIAN APOSTOLATE



The Haitians are one of the ethnic groups that have migrated to the US over the past sixty years. Prior to the cruel dictatorship of Dr. Francois Duvalier, the people of Haiti did not give much thoughts to leaving their homeland. Statistics demonstrate that in the fifties only a couple of hundreds applied for permanent residency in this country. But soon after Duvalier acceded to power in 1957, there was a sharp rise in the demands for US visas. The first wave of immigrants was made up of professionals. Then, it appears that every class of the Haitian society wanted to run away from the increasing suffocation imposed by a paranoid government.

In the late seventies and throughout the eighties a Haitian boat people explosion, not unlike the Cuban boat people crisis a few years earlier, brought the Haitian problem to the

forefront. In Florida, New York, Boston and Chicago, Dioceses began to seek ways to service this new population. Even though there were very few Haitian priests from the US, some American priests began to celebrate mass in French and Creole in areas of greater concentration. Some of these priests were admirable in their dedication to the pastoral care of these newcomers.

Soon Haitian priests began to appear in larger numbers. By the early eighties there were some thirty of them all over the country. In the diocese of Brooklyn the then Chancellor Msgr. Bevilacqua designated a Haitian priest as the coordinator of the Haitian Apostolate in the diocese.

Soon afterward, the Cultural Diversity office of the US Bishops Conference realized that there should

be a National Coordinator for the Haitian Apostolate. Fr. Guy Sansaricq, a Haitian born priest who had been ministering in Brooklyn since 1971 was called to create that office and to incorporate it as a not-for profit organization. This is how the National Office of the Haitian Apostolate was founded in 1988. On Jun 2006, he was appointed as the Auxiliary Bishop of Brooklyn.

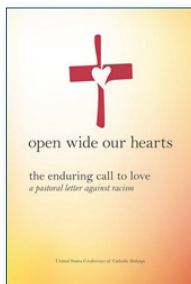
Since then the central office opened in Brooklyn and the apostolate has been expanding its impact. Nowadays, the Haitian Apostolate has become a unique source of pastoral presence for Catholic Haitians in the United States. The Center organizes national conventions and retreats, it produces radio, online and other media resources in Creole to promote evangelization and formation, it has established a Creole Pastoral Institute for lay leaders, and it organizes two annual youth rallies. Other projects are in the making. For example, a book and a documentary are being prepared to expose to the US public the contributions of the Haitian immigrants to the Church and to the US.

The Haitian Apostolate is grateful to the brotherly support it receives from most bishops and hopes that more financial support will enable the implementation of many more spiritual objectives.



# RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Visit <https://store.usccb.org/> to browse and order your resources or call 1-800-235-8722 or [css@usccb.org](mailto:css@usccb.org). Remember to have the product code number ready when placing your order.

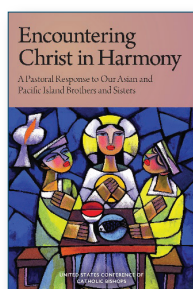


## OPEN WIDE OUR HEARTS: THE ENDURING CALL TO LOVE

Product code 7-606

*In Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love*, the Catholic bishops of the United States invite the reader to recognize the ways in which the evil of racism profoundly impacts the lives of many people in the United States. The pastoral letter reflects on the dignity of every human person and establishes the Church's moral imperative to combat racism as a life issue.

<http://store.usccb.org/open-wide-our-hearts-p/7-606.htm>

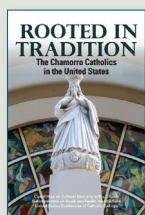


## ENCOUNTERING CHRIST IN HARMONY: A PASTORAL RESPONSE TO OUR ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLAND BROTHERS AND SISTERS (2018)

Product code 7-576

*Encountering Christ in Harmony* hopes to advance the Church's mission of evangelization to specific cultural groups; assist dioceses, parish leaders, other Catholic entities, and the faithful in pastoral outreach to Asian and Pacific Island Catholics; and provide resources and information about Asian and Pacific Island Catholic communities.

<http://store.usccb.org/encountering-christ-in-harmony-p/7-576.htm>

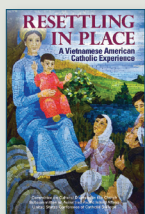


## ROOTED IN TRADITION: THE CHAMORRO CATHOLICS IN THE UNITED STATES

Product code 7-572

A people indigenous to the Mariana Islands in the western Pacific, the Chamorros have a strong Catholic heritage, which they brought with them to the United States.

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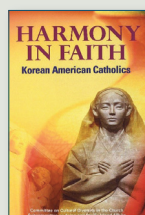


## RESETTLING IN PLACE: A VIETNAMESE AMERICAN CATHOLIC EXPERIENCE

Product Code 7-480

This small book is a snapshot description about a community who rebuilt their faith life by sustaining family values, culture and Catholic devotional practices.

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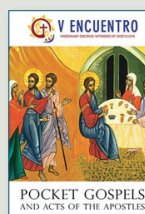


## HARMONY IN FAITH: KOREAN AMERICAN CATHOLICS

Product Code 7-479

This small book on Korean American Catholics connects each believer to their roots in Korea, weaving through thick layers of their history of faith.

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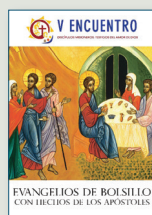


## V ENCUENTRO POCKET GOSPELS AND ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

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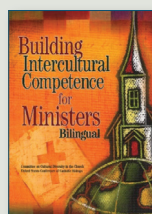


## BEST PRACTICES FOR SHARED PARISHES BILINGUAL

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*Best Practices for Shared Parishes: So That They All May Be One* is a guide to assist pastors of culturally diverse parishes in the challenging task of building unity in diversity. The guide identifies pastoral responses and proven best practices in relation to intercultural competencies in attitudes, knowledge, and skills.

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## BUILDING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE FOR MINISTERS - BILINGUAL

Product code 7-887

The *Building Intercultural Competence for Ministers* manual is designed to help ministry leaders achieve a basic level of awareness and proficiency in the area of intercultural competency. (electronic version)

<http://store.usccb.org/Building-Intercultural-Competence-for-Ministers-p/7-887.htm>

## THE V NATIONAL ENCUENTRO WORKING DOCUMENT (ENGLISH & SPANISH) (VE-106)

This bilingual resource contains the results of the V Encuentro consultation in 28 ministerial areas generated by the participation of over 100,000 missionary disciples in thousands of parishes and other Catholic organizations across the United States. It also offers the most up-to-date population information about Hispanic/Latinos by Episcopal Regions. It is a must have resource for pastoral planning purposes and ministry among Hispanics/Latinos.

# BUILDING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE FOR MINISTERS

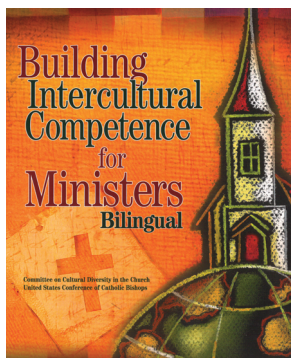
Wednesday, Feb. 13-Friday, Feb. 15



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For more information, visit [www.MidAtlanticCongress.org](http://www.MidAtlanticCongress.org) under "Program."

**\*Pre-registration is required for this workshop\***



Contact Yolanda Taylor-Burwell at [diversity@usccb.org](mailto:diversity@usccb.org) with questions about the workshop.



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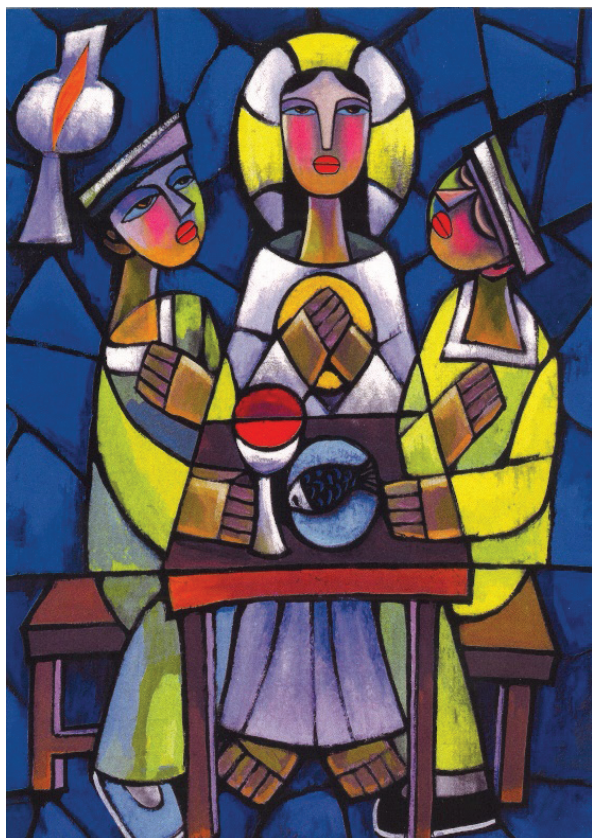
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“Accordingly, we will not cease to speak forcefully against and work toward ending racism. Racism directly places brother and sister against each other, violating the dignity inherent in each person. The Apostle James commands the Christian: “show no partiality as you adhere to the faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ” (Jas 2:1).

# Prayer for Encountering Christ in Harmony

Illustration by Dr. James Qi He



## Prayer for Encountering Christ in Harmony

God of all harmony and source of our faith,  
loving Father who chose us to be your own  
and formed us together as one family in  
Christ, send forth your Spirit among us.

May our encounters with Christ, your Son,  
through the Scriptures and the breaking of  
the bread remind us of our identity in Christ  
amid the multitude of cultural heritages  
present in your Church today.

May our encounters with the Blessed Virgin Mary  
and with the communion of saints,  
strengthen us so that we may sustain  
and pass down the Catholic faith of our  
ancestors and elders from one generation to  
the next.

May our encounters with one another, in our families  
and parishes, nurture more leaders among  
us, that they may answer your call more  
readily, and look to Christ, our Savior,  
as the example of humble service.

Enliven our hearts this day and always, so that, going  
forth into the world, we may become better  
servants of your Word and bearers of your  
love for all to see.

We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, who  
strengthens us in faith, and in the power of  
the Holy Spirit, who binds us together in  
love and harmony, one God, forever and  
ever. Amen.

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