



CLASSROOM IDEA

Prayer Service for Solidarity

Opening Prayer

Good and gracious God, you invite us to love one another as brothers and sisters. Give us the courage to clearly see and challenge all that would divide us. Where racism persists, let us stand in solidarity with those who are persecuted, those who live in fear, and those who are marginalized by the structures of society.

In the face of violence and hatred, we look to the words of the prophet Micah to guide our actions: "To do justice and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).

Strengthen our hearts to love our neighbor as you love us.

We ask all things through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

First Reading

A reading compiled from the United States Catholic Bishops' pastoral letter "Brothers and Sisters to Us."

Racism is a sin: a sin that divides the human family, blots out the image of God among specific members of that family, and violates the fundamental human dignity of those called to be children of the same Father. Racism is the sin that says some human beings are inherently superior and others essentially inferior because of race.

When we give in to our fears of the other because he or she is of a race different from ourselves, when we prejudge the motives of

others precisely because they are of a different color, when we stereotype or ridicule the other because of racial characteristics and heritage, we fail to heed the command of the Prophet Amos: "Seek good and not evil, that you may live; then truly will the Lord . . . be with you as you claim! . . . Then let justice surge like water, and goodness like an unfailing stream" (Amos, 5:14,24).

In order to find the strength to overcome the evil of racism, we must look to Christ. In Christ Jesus "there does not exist among you Jew or Greek, slave or freedom, male or female. All are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

Second Reading

(Play some instrumental music in the background and consider a ritual action, such as illuminating a battery-powered candle or just taking a moment of silence after each reflection).

When I think about those who feel threatened by racial equality . . .

Student 2: I look to Psalm 72 and remember that living in right relationship with others brings peace

(ritual action)

Student 1: When I am inspired by those willing to take a stand . . .

Student 2: I recall in the Gospel of Matthew that peacemakers are blessed and will be called children of God.

(ritual action)

Student 1: When I am hurt or angry at the way people are treated . . .

Student 2: I am encouraged by Paul's Letter to the Colossians to clothe myself in love and let the peace of Christ reign in my heart.

(ritual action)

Student 1: When the task of justice seems too great . . .

Student 2: I follow the instructions in Zechariah to speak truth, judge well, and make peace.

(ritual action)

Student 1: When my heart aches for those who have lost their lives in the fight for racial equality . . .

Student 2: I am comforted by the Gospel of John, which reminds me that there is no greater love than to lay down one's life for a friend.

(ritual action)

Student 1: When I feel disconnected from people who look different from me, immigrants and refugees, believers from other faith traditions, and all who are persecuted . . .

Student 2: I look to Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, knowing that when one member of Christ's body suffers, all suffer.

(ritual action)



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Gospel Reading

Matthew 22:37–40

“You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your 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 commandments.”

Short Reflection or Show UNDERSTANDING

RACISM: Reverse Poem:

<https://vimeo.com/195994157>

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: All peace comes from God. Let us now turn to God and offer our prayers for a world in need. The response to each petition will be, “Lord, hear our prayer.”

Reader: For the peace of the world, that a spirit of respect and forbearance may grow among nations and peoples, let us pray to the Lord. *(Lord, hear our prayer.)*

Reader: For the holy Church of God, that it may be filled with truth and love and be found without fault at the day of your coming, let us pray to the Lord. *(Lord, hear our prayer.)*

Reader: For those in positions of public trust, that they may serve justice and promote the dignity and freedom of all people, let us pray to the Lord. *(Lord, hear our prayer.)*

Reader: For the poor, the persecuted, the sick, and all who suffer; for refugees, prisoners, and all who are in danger, that they may be relieved and protected, let us pray to the Lord. *(Lord, hear our prayer.)*

Reader: For our enemies and those who wish us harm, and for all whom we have injured or offended, let us pray to the Lord. *(Lord, hear our prayer.)*

Reader: For all who have died in the faith of Christ, that with all the saints, they may have rest in that place where there is no pain or grief, but life eternal, let us pray to the Lord. *(Lord, hear our prayer.)*

Leader: Loving God, may the light of Christ shine in our hearts and may these prayers transform us into the peacemakers we are called to be. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Our Father

Leader: Let us pray with confidence to the Father in the words our Savior gave us. *(Pray the Lord's Prayer together.)*

Sign of Peace

Leader: In our desire to create peace in the world, let us offer one another a Sign of Peace. *(Allow sufficient time for an exchange of peace.)*

Closing Prayer

Student 1: God of endless love, ever caring, ever strong, always present, always just: you gave your only Son to save us by the Blood of his cross.

Student 2: Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace, join to your own suffering the pain of all who have been hurt in body, mind,

and spirit by those who betrayed the trust placed in them.

Student 3: Hear our cries as we agonize over the harm done to our brothers and sisters. Breathe wisdom into our prayers, soothe restless hearts with hope, steady shaken spirits with faith: show us the way to justice and wholeness, enlightened by truth and enfolded in your mercy.

Student 4: Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts, heal your people's wounds and transform our brokenness. Grant us courage and wisdom, humility and grace, so that we may act with justice and find peace in you. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

This prayer service is adapted from the Saint Mary's Press Solidarity eLearning course: <http://elearning.smp.org/courses/solidarity>.

The first reading is from the United States Catholic Bishops' pastoral letter "Brothers and Sisters to Us," at: <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/african-american/brothers-and-sisters-to-us.cfm>.

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The intercessory prayers are from "Prayers of Intercession." *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*, United States Catholic Conference, 2008.

The closing prayer is from "Prayer for Healing." *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*, United States Catholic Conference, 2008.