

**Prayer Service for Solidarity for Schools and Parishes**

**Gathering Song suggestions:**

* We Are Called by David Haas
* All are Welcome by Marty Haugen

**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.

**Reading I**

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)

<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/african-american/brothers-and-sisters-to-us.cfm>

**Sung response suggestions:**

* We Shall Overcome – African American Spiritual
* Christ Be Our Light by Bernadette Farrell
* God of Day, God of Darkness by Marty Haugen

**Reading II** (Music playing softly in the background)

Student: When I think about those who feel threatened by racial equality…

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

Ritual Action: Light a candle

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

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

Ritual Action: Light a candle

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

Student: 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: Light a candle

Student: When the task of justice seems too great…

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

Ritual Action: Light a candle

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

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

Ritual Action: Light a candle

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

Ritual: Light a candle

Source: <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/solidarity.cfm>

**Gospel Reading**

Mt. 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 “Reverse Racism” 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.

Response: Kyrie Eleison or Lord, Have Mercy

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. **R/.**

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. **R/.**

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. **R/.**

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. **R/.**

For our enemies and those who wish us harm, and for all whom we have injured or offended, let us pray to the Lord. **R/.**

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. **R/.**

**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.

Source: “Prayers of Intercession.” *Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers*, United States Catholic Conference, 2008.

**Leader:** Let us pray with confidence to the Father in the words our Savior gave us.

**All**: The Lord’s Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;   
thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread;   
and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us;   
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

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

**Closing Prayer**: *(Select four students to read the 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

Source: “Prayer for Healing.” *Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers*, United States Catholic Conference, 2008.

Closing Song Suggestions:

* Blest Be The Lord by Dan Schutte
* They’ll Know We Are Christians by Peter Scholtes
* We Are the Light of the World by Jean Anthony Greif