Hope Task Force  
Catholic Diocese of Columbus  
January 2020  
Theme: Racism

Sample Prayer:

God of Heaven and Earth,  
you created the one human family  
and endowed each person with great dignity.  

Aid us, we pray, in overcoming the sin of racism.  
Grant us your grace in eliminating this blight  
from our hearts, our communities,  
our social and civil institutions.  

Fill our hearts with love for you and our neighbor  
so that we may work with you  
in healing our land from racial injustice.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.

Sample bulletin announcements:

In November 2018 the Catholic bishops of the United States released a Pastoral Letter Against Racism called, Open Wide Our Hearts. The letter is a powerful invitation for all the people of God to “face courageously the vice of racism . . . 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.” At usccb.org/racism, you can read the entire letter, get new resources and find ideas for how we can respond.

Racism is divisive and damages the harmony and oneness that should characterize all our relationships. What divides us does not have to destroy us. Differences do not have to frighten us. Following the advice of St. Paul, we can pray for the grace to look beyond our own prejudices: “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you” (Eph: 4:32). Recall that before his death, Christ prayed, “May they all be one” (Jn 17:21).
When asked which was the first of all the commandments, Jesus replied the first is this: “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ And the second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Mk 12: 28-31). Obviously, racism goes against the commandment of love. We are all called, therefore, to oppose racism in our communities.

Loving neighbors who are different from us through kind and generous actions can be as simple as forming friendships, supporting minority-owned businesses, or participating in community activities with those of other faiths or other races. Loving our God obligates us to love our neighbors as well.

Fr. Augustus Tolton was the first recognized black Catholic priest in the U.S. A former slave, he was baptized and raised Catholic. He studied for the priesthood in Rome, since no American seminary would admit him due to his skin color. As a priest, he ministered to the black Catholic community in Quincy, Illinois. Known for eloquent sermons, generosity, and piety, he attracted both black and white Catholics to his parish. Later chased out of Quincy, he was welcomed by the Archdiocese of Chicago. He died in 1897. Despite his experiences, Fr. Tolton remained steadfast: “The Catholic Church deplores a double slavery – that of the mind and that of the body. She endeavors to free us of both. I was a poor slave boy but the priests of the Church did not disdain me.” Fr. Tolton’s cause of canonization was opened in 2015. For more information about the cause of canonization of Fr. Augustus Tolton, go to www.toltoncanonization.org.

Sample Social Media Posts:
RACISM STILL PROFUNDLY AFFECTS OUR CULTURE, AND IT HAS NO PLACE IN THE CHRISTIAN HEART. THIS EVIL CAUSES GREAT HARM TO ITS VICTIMS, AND IT CORRUPTS THE SOULS OF THOSE WHO HARBOR RACIST OR PREJUDICIAL THOUGHTS.

Open Wide Our Hearts: The enduring call to love
A pastoral letter against racism

Diocese of Columbus
We renew our call to all to act swiftly to stop using hate-filled language that demeans and divides us and motivates some to such horrific violence. Instead, we ask our leaders and all Americans to work to unite us as a great, diverse, and welcoming people.

USCCB Chairmen for Committees on Migration, Domestic Social Development; and Ad Hoc Committee on Racism