

Annual Archdiocesan Respect Life Essay Contest
High School
2020-2021 School Year

Theme: OPEN WIDE OUR HEARTS

In 2018, the U.S. Bishops published a pastoral letter addressing racism, calling for conversion of hearts and for structural change.

Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love: A Pastoral Letter Against Racism states:

“Racism occurs because a person ignores the fundamental truth that, because all humans share a common origin, they are all brothers and sisters, all equally made in the image of God. When this truth is ignored, the consequence is prejudice and fear of the other, and—all too often—hatred. Cain forgets this truth in his hatred of his brother. Recall the words in the First Letter of John: “Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life remaining in him” (1 Jn 3:15). (<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/racism/upload/open-wide-our-hearts.pdf>)

Essay Question:

With particular reference to *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love: A Pastoral Letter Against Racism*, discuss how combatting racism is a life issue and explain how Jesus’ teaching shows that. Pick one of these two prompts. Support your essay with concrete examples.

1. Write about how the dignity of each person should be and/or is manifested in actions you have observed in person or in the news during the past few months. Support your essay with one to three examples of how the Gospel of love and Jesus’ teaching of the dignity of every person was demonstrated or could be shown. You may also support your essay with statements from St. John Paul’s encyclical *Evangelium vitae*, statements made by Pope Francis, and/or the Catechism of the Catholic Church, as well as other resources listed below.
2. Discuss with concrete examples the meaning of this statement in *Open Wide Our Hearts*: “The injustice and harm racism causes are an attack on human life. The Church in the United States has spoken out consistently and forcefully against abortion, assisted suicide, euthanasia, the death penalty, and other forms of violence that threaten human life. It is not a secret that these attacks on human life have severely affected people of color, who are disproportionately affected by poverty, targeted for abortion, have less access to healthcare, have the greatest numbers on death row, and are most likely to feel pressure to end their lives when facing serious illness. As bishops, we unequivocally state that racism is a life issue.”

RESOURCES:

1. The Gospels, which recount Christ's life and teachings
2. The Archdiocese of San Francisco Office of Human Life & Dignity webpages
<https://sfarch.org/combating-racism> & <https://sfarch.org/culture-of-life>
3. U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' pastoral letter on racism, "Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love - A Pastoral Letter Against Racism." Found at sfarch.org/combating-racism.
4. The Gospel of Life, *Evangelium vitae*, linked at sfarch.org/culture-of-life.
5. Pope Francis has many homilies, talks, presentations, which are easily available on YouTube or on www.vaticannews.org. You may find a quote that helps focus your essay on an issue that is of particular note at this time for example: Racism, Immigration, Protection of the Unborn, Protection of the Elderly, The Death Penalty
6. The Catechism of the Catholic Church, may help ground your essay in Catholic teaching.
<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catechism/catechism-of-the-catholic-church/>
7. During the summer many priests and bishops have spoken regarding the sacredness of human life in particular about the sacredness of Black lives at this time. Their homilies, articles, comments may also be found online.
8. Walter Hoye, a Black civil rights leader in the Bay Area, has gone to jail in Oakland for his beliefs. He works against racism and for life particularly in the Black community.
<https://issues4life.org/>