

## **January 19, 2020**

### **Second Sunday of Ordinary Time**

It has been quite a week! Snow, two days of our parish and school campus closed, kids love it, and it is a mixed bag for adults. Some like a day or two of rest, for others it just makes life more complicated. Now, for many we have another short week with the Martin Luther King Holiday.

How will you observe Martin Luther King Day? Will you do anything different this different other than listen to the spots on the news about the legacy of social reform to overcome racism that Dr. King left for us?

In the fall of 2018, the United State Catholic Bishops published a pastoral letter on racism called "Open Wide Your Hearts." One thing you could do is use your search engine and type "Open Wide Your Hearts" and there it will be. I encourage you to read the letter. Just remember the simple phrase, "open wide your hearts." Later this week we will post a two-minute video post on our website that gives a simple summary of the letter. You could also attend a Mass with Archbishop Etienne at St. Ignatius Chapel on the Seattle University campus on Monday at 11:00 am organized by Black Catholics in Seattle to observe MLK Day. God calls all of us to help to overcome one of the deepest wounds of our nation, the sin of racism and to be instruments of transformation in our society.

Jesus Christ transformed us in our baptism. We are no longer slaves, slaves to the devil and his empty promises. No, we are adopted daughters and sons of God the Father. It is only through Jesus that we can dare to call our Father. John the Baptist testifies that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. When we are in one with Christ, he restores our relationship to the Father, which enables us to be on the path to a proper relationship with each other. We get a glimpse of that promise in the first reading today when the Prophet Isaiah proclaims "It is too little, the Lord says, for you to be my servant . . . I will make you a light to the nations, that my salvation my reach to the ends of the earth." God will lead us to overcome divisions that would be impossible to overcome on our own. Jesus fulfills the promise of Isaiah.

“Open Wide Our Hearts” calls for us to do all we can to overcome the divisions and on-going struggles caused by racism in our society including those within our Church. The Bishops acknowledge that they with other religious leaders have been part of the problem and failed in the past to speak boldly against the sin and racism. They allowed in the past for segregation in some Catholic parishes. Black parishioners received communion after the white parishioners. We need to start with ourselves.

The Bishops wrote, “Open Wide Your Hearts” to acknowledge, “racism still profoundly 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.” As Catholics gather across the Archdiocese on Tuesday for the Pro-Life March in Olympia, we also need to acknowledge that overcoming the sin of racism a life issue. Racism is an attack on the dignity of the human person. Here is what they bishops write: “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.” (HWOH p. 30.) “Too many good and faithful Catholics remain unaware of the connection between institutional racism and the continued erosion of the sanctity of human life.”(HWOH p. 10)

What can we do? The Bishops ask that priests and deacons use national holidays like this weekend and other times to preach against racism frequently. They call upon every Catholic to educate themselves and to be aware of the many ways that racism effects our thinking and behavior, which is even more reason to read the pastoral letter or watch the video. They ask that Catholic Schools and Faith Formation Programs continue and even increase teaching about the evil of racism the for the entire church to pray humbly for the ongoing conversion of our minds and hearts. Catholic parishes need to continue to promote the celebration of different cultures. They ask that we work together with other faith communities to overcome racism, which is important to consider for Christian Unity Week. They ask that all of us be willing to form relationships and enter into dialogue with those we would rather avoid. They conclude the letter with a quote from I Cor. 16:14, “Every act should be done with love.” Isn’t that the core of our life together in Christ?