

Walking Together: Brothers and Sisters Responding to Racism



A Program Guide
for the Christian Family
Movement

Walking Together: Brothers and Sisters Responding to Racism

Missionary discipleship is a journey of ongoing conversion. Christians accompany one another on this journey as individual believers, and in our marriages, families, parishes, and communities. We learn together and support one another as we take up our mission to engage in loving acts, seek peace and justice, and invite others to know Christ. We do not do this from a distance, but alongside one another. We walk with particular care alongside those whose lives are seriously impacted by individual and social sin. We walk together as brothers and sisters.

The sin of racism has been called the “original sin” of the United States of America by Bishop Robert Barron and others. Most of us are familiar with the history of racism in America. However, racism is not only a matter of history. We know that the sin of racism continues to cause great suffering.

This three-meeting series is aimed at employing CFM’s method of social inquiry to help families observe, judge, and act in response to racism in their own hearts, in their relationships with family and friends, and in their parishes and communities. By journeying together through this difficult topic as a CFM group, we pray that we will grow in discipleship and enter more fully into our shared mission. The dignity of all human beings, created and loved by God in God’s image, demands that brothers and sisters of all races walk together in response to racism.



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Walking Together:

Brothers and Sisters Responding to Racism

Three Meeting Guides for Small Groups

1. Opening Hearts
2. Seeking Peace
3. Witnessing Love

The Mission of the Christian Family Movement is:

- To promote Christ-centered marriage and family life;
- To help individuals and their families to live the Christian faith in everyday life; and
- To improve society through actions of love, service, education and example.



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OUTLINE OF A CFM MEETING

CFM groups usually meet in homes. The group members take turns hosting the meeting. If this is impossible for reason of the size of members' homes or geographical distances involved, groups sometimes meet in a Church-based location.

Gather

This part of the meeting is a chance to reconnect and build community.

OPENING PRAYER

The meeting should begin with a prayer. Each program chapter begins with a prayer suggestion. Spontaneous prayer is also often used. Leaders may wish to add music or make use of other prayer resources.

Report on actions

By reflecting on its actions, the group will achieve a deeper understanding of the problem and all its implications. Further action may be called for.

Scripture Reflection

The meeting proceeds to a reading from the Bible. Questions are suggested for exploring the meaning of the Word in daily life.

SOCIAL INQUIRY

The social inquiry is a term for the Observe-Judge-Act process, basic to CFM's approach to Christian living.

Observe

First, get the facts. Sometimes opinions are facts, but at this stage of the meeting members should refrain from expressing their opinions. Try to filter your own points of view and simply report, like any good objective news reporter. Bring facts and information from current media and local organizations into the Observe section.

Judge

Observe answers the question, "What is the situation?" The Judge part of the Social Inquiry answers the question, "How can we make it a Christian experience and reality?" Recognize what steps you and your group can take to effect Christian change in the situations you have observed and reported on.

Act

The best kind of action is one that grows from the group's observations and their decisions to change or develop a situation. Suggestions in this book are ideas, not

directives. Formation-through-action is the essence of CFM. The founders of the movement believed that persons are shaped by their experiences. Share your successful action experiences with CFM in ACT Newsletter, director@cfm.org .

Look Ahead to the Next Meeting

Confirm the date and location of the next meeting. What advance work should be done? What particular Observe tasks should be assigned? Be sure to contact your host if you are unable to attend or need directions.

CLOSING PRAYER

A prayer is suggested or the group can intercede for special intentions.

SOCIAL TIME

A short social time with simple refreshments such as rolls and coffee helps members know and understand one another better and builds the group's community.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1 OPENING HEARTS

GATHER

Take a few minutes as needed for introductions and to share any general information about the structure of your CFM meetings.

OPENING PRAYER

Dear God, you call us to see and honor our neighbor as created in your divine image and likeness, and to love others as we love ourselves. Help us to recognize attitudes about race that may be obstacles to our response to this call. We ask that you open our hearts to how racism is present in our own understandings and actions; that you open our hearts to your forgiveness; and that you open our hearts to conversion, as we seek to grow as disciples of your son, Jesus Christ.

REPORT ON ACTIONS

Read the introduction to this series together. You might also read together Bishop Barron's August 2017 statement following events in Charlottesville, Virginia:
<https://www.wordonfire.org/resources/article/charlottesville-and-americas-original-sin/5564/>.

Next week, you will use this time to report on actions (suggestions below) taken up in response to this meeting.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

GENESIS 1:26-31

"Then God said: 'Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the tame animals, all the wild animals, and all the creatures that crawl on the earth.'

"God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and God said to them: Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that crawl on the earth.

"God also said: 'See, I give you every seed-bearing plant on all the earth and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit on it to be your food; and to all the wild animals, all the birds of the air, and all the living creatures that crawl on the earth, I give all the green plants for food.' And so it happened. God looked at everything he had made and found it very good. Evening came, and morning followed—the sixth day."

1. Is any human being excluded from this understanding of human beings created in the image and after the likeness of God?
2. When you consider God's "image" and "likeness" does a particular picture of a human being come to mind?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

"Dealing with the reality of racism in the United States is not easy. If it were, we would be well on our way to a more just world. But to have an honest, adult conversation about race, people might need to feel uncomfortable—embarrassed, ashamed, fearful, angry, overwhelmed, helpless and/or paralyzed—because there are few issues that grip and affect us emotionally more than the issue of race...

"Because we live in the society that we do, in which meanings and values are attached to skin color, and learned almost by osmosis, when we relate to one another, we carry implicit biases and associations...

"Thus when we speak of racism in the United States, we are talking about a system of white supremacy. White supremacy fundamentally is the assumption that this country, its political institutions, its cultural heritage, its social policies and its public spaces belong to white people in a way that they do not belong to others. It is the basic assumption that some naturally belong in our public and cultural space and others have to justify being there. Further, it is the suspicion that those 'others' are in 'our' space only because someone has made special allowances for them...

"For a believer, it is important to see racism as a soul sickness. Racism is that interior disease, that warping of the human spirit, that enables us to create communities where some matter and some do not....

"When we are soul-sick, we need to be re-created. We need to become new beings. We need a new way of thinking, a new way of living, a new way of loving. We need to become new creations...Are we ready to do this for God?

"As I write this, anticipating a resounding 'yes' from the readers, I can hear my grandmother saying, 'Y'all are fibbing'...Few truly desire to be re-created... Everybody wants to improve, but few truly want to change...

"The good news is that...the Spirit of God will make us ready and give us what we need...The goal is not for us personally to cross the finish line and enter into the racial promised land. Our goal is to simply run our leg of the race and do our work, so that we can pass the baton to those who will come after us."

– Fr. Bryan N. Massingale, *"The Sickness of the American Soul"*

From your own experience, OBSERVE:

1. Consider your “neighbors” in concentric circles: from your family; to those who live near you; to those you worship with; to those you work with; to those in your community you interact with; to those in your community you don’t interact with; to those who live further away from you, etc. What are the socio-demographic (e.g., age, race, ethnicity, and language) or socio-economic (e.g., income and education) differences among these circles of neighbors?
2. Have you observed people experiencing racial discrimination? What happened?
3. Ask two people, how they would define individual racism. What did they say?
4. On a scale of 1-10 (with 1 being very uncomfortable and 10 being very comfortable), how comfortable are you with this topic of discussion?

“Individual discrimination refers to the behavior of individual members of one race/ethnic/gender group that is intended to have a differential and/or harmful effect on the members of another race/ethnic/gender group.”

- Fred L. Pincus, *“Discrimination Comes in Many Forms: Individual, Institutional, and Structural”*

In light of Christ’s teaching, JUDGE:

1. From your reading and discussion, try to come up with a shared group understanding of individual racism.
2. Based on this definition of racism, have you ever expressed racism in your thoughts, your words, or your actions?
3. Have you ever felt racism directed toward you by someone else?
4. How does racism impact a Christian’s ability to live the commandment to love your neighbor as self?
5. How might racism get in the way of a Christian’s response to the commandment to love God?

ACT, as a group or individually:

Ideally ACTs are inspired and identified through your discussion. The list below contains ideas that may be appropriate.

1. Pay particular attention to the quality of your thoughts, words, and actions in light of your growing awareness of individual racism.
2. Explore stories of the impact of individual racism on people of color in the United States, either in conversation with those affected or through books, movies, or other media. If you find a good source for these stories, be prepared to share it with the group at the next meeting.
3. Talk honestly with your spouse or a trusted friend about your feelings when confronting your own racism.

Our Action to be carried out and reported at the next meeting:

AT HOME, DISCUSS AS A FAMILY

1. What does each member of the family understand individual racism to be? How easy or hard is this to talk about?
2. Who is our neighbor? What does it mean to love your neighbor as yourself? How do differences such as race affect how you love your neighbor?

LOOK AHEAD TO THE NEXT MEETING

Take a look at the Observes for the next meeting to see what needs to be done in preparation

Date_____Time_____Place_____

1. Phone or email host if you cannot attend
2. Look ahead at the Observe questions for the next meeting.
3. Who could you invite to join our group?

If children have come to the meeting with their parents, gather them to join you in the closing prayer.

CLOSING PRAYER

Merciful God, it is difficult to see fault in ourselves, especially a fault such as racism which is deeply connected with suffering and anger in our brothers and sisters. Help us to resist the temptation to close our hearts in response to this difficulty. Instead, strengthen us to open our hearts ever more to the good work you have begun in us so that we might join more fully in that work out of our love for you and in response to your call to love others as we love ourselves. Amen.

WORKS CITED

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2 SEEKING PEACE

GATHER

OPENING PRAYER

Peace Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.

REPORT ON ACTIONS

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

EPHESIANS 2:14-22

“For he is our peace, he who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through his flesh, abolishing the law with its commandments and legal claims, that he might create in himself one new person in place of the two, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile both with God, in one body, through the cross, putting that enmity to death by it.

“He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near, for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

“So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone.

“Through him the whole structure is held together and grows into a temple sacred in the Lord; in him you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

1. If you and a friend or family member hold differing, strongly held views - if there is enmity between you - how can you be “built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit”?
2. In your family and close relationships, how have you experienced or seen Christ bringing people together even amid hostility?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

“I asked [some Hispanic Catholic families] if they talked about racism at home, and if so, how they approached the topic. From those conversations, I learned three things.

“One, Hispanic families are very aware that racism is real in our society. Not as an abstract idea or as a sociopolitical problem that affects others. Racism is personal. It hits home, literally. Hispanic families experience instances of racism on a regular basis. Because racism is real and personal, Hispanic parents speak regularly with their children about it. Many of these conversations focus on behaving “con cuidado” (carefully). These parents are not naive. They know that racial, ethnic, and cultural biases often define their interactions with others in the larger society.

“Two, Hispanic families want to learn how to best navigate a society where they and their children are often the target of racism as well as ethnic and cultural biases. This seems like the perfect opportunity for pastoral leaders to accompany these families. Let us not miss it!

“Three, Hispanic parents know that our Hispanic cultures are not innocent of racial and cultural biases. This was perhaps the most revealing aspect of my conversations. Diagnosing the illness is the first step toward healing.

“The treatment of black and indigenous communities in Latin America and the Caribbean has been historically deplorable. It is no secret that the polarizing climate that divides the U.S. tends to pitch Hispanics against other cultural groups — and vice versa. If not addressed, these realities will lead to further biases. These conversations with Hispanic Catholic families are a reminder that no one is immune to the sin of racism. Besides a humbling sense of honesty, in these personal conversations I noticed the absence of three attitudes: name-calling, pessimism, and denial. These are much-needed conversations. We need more people and families with the courage to start them.”

- *Dr. Hosffman Ospino, “The Courage to Talk About Racism in the Family”*

From your own experience, OBSERVE:

1. Do you talk about racism in your home? If so, what has triggered these conversations?
2. Do you talk about racism with your extended family or friends? If so, what has triggered these conversations?

3. In any of these conversations, have there been instances of “name-calling” or “pessimism” or “denial” - on your part or on the part of another?
4. How would you describe the outcome of the conversations you have had with family or friends about racism?
5. Has a differing view with a family member or friend about racism caused a rift in your relationship?

In light of Christ’s teaching, JUDGE:

1. In conversations with family or friends about racism, what would you say opens up the conversation or advances it toward a positive outcome?
2. In conversations with family or friends about racism, what would you say shuts down the conversation or takes it toward a negative outcome?
3. Are there times when it might be most in line with Christian principles not to begin or not to continue a conversation about racism?
4. Are there times when it would be against Christian principles to avoid a conversation about racism?
5. Is there ever a time to separate yourself from family or friends because of differing fundamental views?

ACT, as a group or individually:

Ideally ACTs are inspired and identified through your discussion. The list below contains ideas that may be appropriate.

1. Take notice of when the topic of racism comes up - directly or indirectly - when you are with family or friends. Does this lead to a conversation? What is the outcome? Does it move you toward peace or away from peace?
2. If you are experiencing a strained relationship with a family member or friend over the issue of racism, pray for guidance in addressing this conflict. Do you see a step you could take in repairing the rift in your relationship?
3. Explore books and other resources to help your family live your faith on issues such as racism. One book you might consider is *Raising Kids Who Will Make a Difference: Helping Your Family Live with Integrity, Value Simplicity, and Care for Others* by Susan Vogt, published by Loyola Press in 2002. If you find another helpful resource, bring it to the next meeting to share with the group.

Our Action to be carried out and reported at the next meeting:

AT HOME, DISCUSS AS A FAMILY

1. Share times when racism or conversations about racism expressed at a gathering with family or friends has made any of you uncomfortable. How can you support one another in these situations?

2. Are there times when racism expressed or experienced at work or school has challenged a friendship? How can you help one another respond well to these situations?
3. Imagine scenarios in which you, your spouse, or your children might want to have a conversation about racism with a family member or friend. What tips can you offer one another for moving this conversation toward peace with compassion and conviction.

LOOK AHEAD TO THE NEXT MEETING

Take a look at the Observes for the next meeting to see what needs to be done in preparation

Date _____ Time _____ Place _____

1. Phone or email host if you cannot attend
2. Look ahead at the Observe questions for the next meeting.
3. Who could you invite to join our group?

If children have come to the meeting with their parents, gather them to join you in the closing prayer.

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear God, our families and friendships are not perfect. We cause each other pain and we inspire in each other anger. We are tempted to turn away from one another and from you in these moments.

This is not the way we desire to live. We desire instead to live in peace, to bring your peace into our homes and share it with our extended family and friends.

Please help us to be tender with one another, especially in moments of disagreement and strained communication.

Please help us to temper necessary honesty with ourselves and one another with compassion.

Please help us to move beyond pain, anger, and pride to find a way to walk forward together to build your Kingdom.

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3 WITNESSING LOVE

GATHER

OPENING PRAYER

We begin our meeting with a prayer of thanksgiving and hope from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dear God...

We thank you for your church, founded upon your Word, that challenges us to do more than sing and pray, but go out and work as though the very answer to our prayers depended on us and not upon you. Help us to realize that humanity was created to shine like the stars and live on through all eternity. Keep us, we pray, in perfect peace. Help us to walk together, pray together, sing together, and live together until that day when all God's children - Black, White, Red, Brown and Yellow - will rejoice in one common band of humanity in the reign of our Lord and of our God, we pray. Amen.

We offer this prayer in the name of your son and our Lord, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.

REPORT ON ACTIONS

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

LUKE 4:14-21

“Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news of him spread throughout the whole region. He taught in their synagogues and was praised by all. He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.’

“Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. He said to them, ‘Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.’”

1. In what ways has the Christian mission voiced by the prophet Isaiah been realized in your parish and community?

2. In what ways does this mission remain unrealized?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

“We as Christians know that we are called to “love our neighbor as our self.” If we want peace we must work for justice – and peace *does* justice. The way of the world is to seek and hold on to power, to dominate the “other.” The racial strife we are now experiencing is about superiority. One group has made another group a threat to its privileged status. One group is in fear of the other. This otherness can be culturally, class, or racially-based. No matter. If power is not used for the good of those under that power, peace cannot follow. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. put it, ‘Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.’

“Power, if it is justly administered, must be done out of love. So love is the answer. If we are to have peace in our communities, we Catholics must be among those who are engaged in the struggle. “How?” you may ask. First and foremost, we must live our lives as though we believe in the Gospel. We must love one another as Christ loves us; love all of our neighbors as ourselves, regardless of our station in life, our race, our culture, or our religion. We must work with ministries and agencies which promote the equality of and equal opportunities for human beings. Be part of the solution. Be an ‘accepting’ person. We live in a very culturally diverse society. We must accept this new reality. Intolerance is a learned behavior. It is learned at a young age. So, it is important that our efforts begin early on. Scripture is full of teaching on the merits of loving one’s neighbor. As the faithful, we should lead the way, by example.

“There are programs which teach us how to develop this quality. Recent studies have shown that acceptance education is most effective between the ages of four and nine years of age, and several programs have been developed to help educators teach students how to relate to others from different backgrounds and cultures. One such pilot project *Mix It Up at Lunch Day* by the American Bar Association’s Young Lawyers Division, which has begun in elementary, middle, high schools, and colleges nationwide. It encourages students to identify, question, and go beyond the restrictions of social boundaries....

“That is what our Lord has commanded of us: to “love one another as I have loved you.” These programs and many more can assist us in living out our lives as witnesses to Christ, the Prince of Peace and the author of justice for the entire world. We can be part of the solution.”

- Deacon Al Turner, “*Reflections for the Day of Prayer for Peace in our Communities*”

“[S]tructural discrimination refers to the policies of dominant race/ethnic/gender institutions and the behavior of the individuals who implement these policies and control these institutions, which are race/ethnic/gender neutral in intent but which have a differential and/or harmful effect on minority race/ethnic/gender groups.

- “Discrimination Comes in Many Forms: Individual, Institutional, and Structural” by Fred L. Pincus

From your own experience, OBSERVE:

1. In preparation for this meeting, explore the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops webpage on racism: <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/racism/index.cfm>. Find one quote or idea from the many resources there to share with the group. (You could make assignments ahead of time so that, as a group, you cover more of the resources offered.)
2. Ask two friends how they would define systemic (or structural) racism. What did they say?
3. What organizations or efforts working for racial justice do you see in your local community?
4. Is systemic racism expressed in your parish community or does systemic racism impact your parish community?
5. Do you see efforts for racial justice in your parish?

In light of Christ's teaching, JUDGE:

1. Do you play a part, either intentionally or unintentionally, in structures that reflect or support racism in your community?
2. Do you play a part in work toward racial justice in your community?
3. How are efforts to end systemic racism expressions of Christian love?
4. What challenges do you see to witnessing love in this way?
5. Does work for racial justice need to be public and political? How else can this work take place?
6. When such work is public and political, how should a citizen's Christian values shape that work?

ACT, as a group or individually:

Ideally ACTs are inspired and identified through your discussion. The list below contains ideas that may be appropriate.

1. What ways can your family contribute to efforts for racial justice? Explore avenues of action through your parish, diocese, school, workplace, and community. If you don't see a path for action, think creatively about establishing such a path for families such as yours.
2. What first steps could your group take to support one another's witnessing love for racial justice? Choose one or two steps to enact.
3. Explore the USCCB's webpage on faithful citizenship: <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/>.

Our Action to be carried out and reported at the next meeting:

AT HOME, DISCUSS AS A FAMILY

1. Learn about St. Katharine Drexel, an American saint devoted to the interests of African-American and Native communities and dedicated to fighting all forms of prejudice, racism and oppression.
2. What does it mean to “witness love” in your day-to-day family and community life?

LOOK AHEAD TO THE NEXT MEETING

Take a look at the Observes for the next meeting to see what needs to be done in preparation

Date_____Time_____Place_____

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If children have come to the meeting with their parents, gather them to join you in the closing prayer.

CLOSING PRAYER

PRAYER FOR PEACE IN OUR COMMUNITIES

Let us pray . . .

O Lord our God, in your mercy and kindness,
no thought of ours is left unnoticed,
no desire or concern ignored.

You have proven that blessings abound
when we fall on our knees in prayer,
and so we turn to you in our hour of need.

Surrounded by violence and cries for justice,
we hear your voice telling us what is required . . .
“Only to do justice and to love goodness,
and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8).

Fill us with your mercy so that we, in turn,
may be merciful to others.
Strip away pride, suspicion, and racism so that
we may seek peace and justice in our communities.

Strengthen our hearts so that they beat

only to the rhythm of your holy will.

Flood our path with your light as we walk humbly
toward a future filled with encounter and unity.

Be with us, O Lord, in our efforts,
for only by the prompting of your grace
can we progress toward virtue.

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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