



Prayers and Reflections on Racial Justice

(compiled June 2020)

1

Let us not rush to the language of healing,
before understanding the fullness of the injury and the depth of the wound.

Let us not rush to offer a bandage, when gaping wounds requires surgery and complete reconstruction.

Let us not offer false equivalencies,
thereby diminishing the particular pain
being felt in a particular circumstance in a particular historical moment.

Let us not speak of reconciliation without speaking of reparations and restoration,
or how we can repair the breach and how we can restore the loss.

Let us not rush past the loss of this mother's child, this father's child...someone's beloved son.

Let us not value property over people;
let us not protect material objects while human lives hang in the balance.

Let us not value a false peace over a righteous justice.

Let us not be afraid to sit with the ugliness, messiness, and the pain that is life in community together.

Let us not offer clichés to the grieving, those whose hearts are being torn asunder.

Instead... Let us mourn black and brown men and women, those killed extrajudicially in the US every 28 hours.

Let us lament the loss of a teenager, dead at the hands of a police officer who described him as a demon.

Let us weep at a criminal justice system, which is neither blind nor just.

Let us call for the mourning men and the wailing women,
those willing to rend their garments of privilege and ease,
and sit in the ashes of this nation's original sin.

Let us be silent when we don't know what to say.

Let us be humble and listen to the pain, rage, and grief pouring from the lips of neighbours and friends.

Let us decrease, so that our brothers and sisters who live on the underside of history may increase.

Let us pray with our eyes open and our feet firmly planted on the ground.

Let us listen to the shattering glass & let us smell the purifying fires, for it is the language of the unheard.

God, in your mercy... Show me my own complicity in injustice.

Convict me for my indifference.

Forgive me when I have remained silent.

Equip me with a zeal for righteousness.

Never let me grow accustomed or acclimated to unrighteousness.

A litany for those not ready for healing
Rev Dr Yolanda Pierce, Princetown Seminary

2

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" (Mi 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.

Sisters of Mercy of America

3

Introduction: A true revolution of values will soon cause us to question the fairness and
justice of many of our past and present policies. We are called to play the Good Samaritan
on life's road side, but that will be only an initial act. One day we must come to see that the
whole Jericho road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly
beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life's highway.

True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it is not haphazard and
superficial. Compassion sees that an edifice that produces beggars needs restructuring. A
true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and
wealth.

Let us pray: Ever present God, you called us to be in relationship with one another and
promised to dwell wherever two or three are gathered. In our community, we are many
different people; we come from many different places, have many different cultures.
Open our hearts that we may be bold in finding the riches of inclusion and the treasures of
diversity among us. We pray in faith. Amen.

Jericho Road – Rev Dr Martin Luther King Junior

4

I dream a world where man
No other man will scorn,
Where love will bless the earth
And peace its paths adorn
I dream a world where all
Will know sweet freedom's way,
Where greed no longer saps the soul
Nor avarice blights our day.
A world I dream where black or white,
Whatever race you be,
Will share the bounties of the earth
And every man is free,
Where wretchedness will hang its head
And joy, like a pearl,
Attends the needs of all mankind-
Of such I dream, my world!

Langston Hughes
American poet, social activist, and columnist from Joplin, Missouri

5

O God, author and giver of peace,
in whose image and likeness each of us has been created
with a human dignity worthy of respect on earth
and destined for eternal glory,
Listen to the cry that rises from every corner of this fragile earth,
from our human family torn by violent conflict:

Give peace in our time, O good and gracious God,
that peace which, as your son Jesus Christ told us
and as we have experienced in these days,
is a peace which the world cannot give.

To world leaders grant the wisdom
to see beyond the boundaries of race, religion, and nation
to that common humanity that makes us all your children
and brothers and sisters to one another.

To those who have taken up arms in anger or revenge
or even in the cause of justice
grant the grace of conversion to the path of peaceful dialogue
and constructive collaboration.

To the innocent who live in the shadow of war and terror,
especially the frightened children,
be a shelter and strength, their haven and hope.

And to those who have already lost their lives
as victims of human cruelty and chemical warfare,
open wide your arms and enfold them all
in the embrace of your compassion, healing, and everlasting life. Amen.

Xavier University, United States

6

Almighty and loving God, you, who created ALL people in your image,
lead us to seek your compassion as we listen to the stories of our past.

You gave your only Son, Jesus, who died and rose again so that sins will be forgiven.

We place before you the pain and anguish of dispossession of land, language, lore,
culture and family kinship that so many indigenous peoples have experienced.

We live in faith that all people will rise from the depths of despair and hopelessness.
That so many indigenous peoples have endured the pain and loss of loved ones,
through the separation of children from their families.

We are sorry and ask God's forgiveness.
Touch the hearts of the broken, homeless and afflicted and heal their spirits.
In your mercy and compassion walk with us as we continue our journey of healing
to create a future that is just and equitable.

Lord, you are our hope. Amen.

Australian Council of Churches (adapted)

7 O God of unconditional love,
you who show no partiality in respect to people or nations,
we have heard your good news of great joy for all the people.
We hear that good news, and in hearing, believe.
We know that your sanctuary is a house of worship for all people,
with no regard for the colour of our skin.
As we worship you, knit us into a people,
a seamless garment of many colours.
May we celebrate our unity, made whole in our diversity.
Forgive us for our inability to let our "old selves" die to the world. Amen.

Church of Scotland

8 We are broken-hearted, sickened, and outraged to watch another video of an African American man being killed before our very eyes. What's more astounding is that this is happening within mere weeks of several other such occurrences. This is the latest wake-up call that needs to be answered by each of us in a spirit of determined conversion.

Racism is not a thing of the past or simply a throwaway political issue to be bandied about when convenient. It is a real and present danger that must be met head on. As members of the Church, we must stand for the more difficult right and just actions instead of the easy wrongs of indifference. We cannot turn a blind eye to these atrocities and yet still try to profess to respect every human life. We serve a God of love, mercy, and justice. Lord Hear Our Prayer. Amen.

American Catholic Bishops' Conference

9 O God, father, mother, sister, brother, all our faces are seen across the world. Across this land, help us to value and enjoy the diversity in your creation and in the human family.

Help us to embrace one another and allow your Spirit to transform and enrich us in these growing relationships.

We pray for your grace to touch our lives in ways that bring us to life to work for your more effectively.

Help each of us to know more clearly who we are, that all can be proud of being created in your image and trust your presence with us on our life's journey. Amen.

Anonymous

10 O God, who created and loves all people, we come before you today confessing the sin of racism in our country, our church and in ourselves. Forgive us for our part in it, for the ways we have contributed to the oppression of others whether knowingly or unknowingly.

We want to be different and for our nation to be different, but it is hard when we face the injustice of institutions as well as the prejudice in ourselves.

Help us to see the reality of racism and bigotry wherever it exists and to have the courage to challenge it.

Through your Holy Spirit, may we be given the grace and power to change within ourselves and also, to join with others to do the work of love and justice in the world; to move toward the goal of bringing an end to racism. Through the name of your son, Jesus, who came for all people, Amen.

**Heather Burtch, member,
United Methodist Church of the USA anti-racism team**

11 Lord, Jesus Christ
who reached across the ethnic boundaries
between Samaritan, Roman and Jew
who offered fresh sight to the blind and freedom to captives,
help us to break down the barriers in our community,
enable us to see the reality of racism and bigotry,
and free us to challenge and uproot it
from ourselves, our society and our world. Amen.

Rev John Bucki SJ (RIP), Syracuse, United States

12 Good and gracious God, you invite us to recognize and reverence your divine image and likeness in our neighbour. Enable us to see the reality of racism and free us to challenge and uproot it from our society, our world and ourselves.

Good and gracious God, Who loves and delights in all people, we stand in awe before You, knowing that the spark of life within each person on earth is the spark of your divine life.

Differences among cultures and races are multi-coloured manifestations of Your Light.

May our hearts and minds be open to celebrate similarities and differences among our sisters and brothers.

We place our hopes for racial harmony in our committed action and in Your Presence in our Neighbour.

May all peoples live in Peace. Amen.

Sisters of Mercy, United States

13 Creator of all people, in our amazing diversity of size, shape, colour, and giftedness: guide us, by your grace, to recognize the beauty and fitness of all whom you have made in your own image.

Give us gifts of humility and generosity of spirit to recognize in all people, the face of our Saviour, Jesus, and to practice his commandment to "love one another," toward the end of bringing harmony and peace among persons of all colours, origins, and abilities, for the sake of your Kingdom. Amen.

Episcopal Diocese of West Virginia

14 Dear God, In our efforts to dismantle racism, we understand that we struggle not merely against flesh and blood but against powers and principalities – those institutions and systems that keep racism alive by perpetuating the lie that some members of the family are inferior and others superior.

Create in us a new mind and heart that will enable us to see brothers and sisters in the faces of those divided by racial categories.

Give us the grace and strength to rid ourselves of racial stereotypes that oppress some of us while providing entitlements to others.

Help us to create a church and a nation that embraces the hopes and fears of oppressed people of colour where we live, as well as those around the world.

Heal your family God, and make us one with you, in union with our brother Jesus, and empowered by your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Pax Christi

15 O God, who show a father's care for all, grant, in your mercy, that the members of the human race,
to whom you have given a single origin,
may form in peace a single family
and always be united by a fraternal spirit.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Franciscan Friars, United States

16 God, You are the source of human dignity, and it is in your image that we are created.
Pour out on us the spirit of love and compassion.

Enable us to reverence each person, to reach out to anyone in need,
to value and appreciate those who differ from us,
to share the resources of our nation,
to receive the gifts offered to us by people from other cultures.

Grant that we may always promote the justice and acceptance
that ensures lasting peace and racial harmony.

Help us to remember that we are one world and one family. Amen.

Australian Catholic Social Justice Council

17 We acknowledge that we participate in structures that are inherently racist, and yet we so often do nothing to remedy it.

Show us we fail when we judge others according to the colour of their flesh.

God, who is rich in mercy, loves us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ.

By grace you have been saved. In the name of Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven.

Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in your hearts through faith. Amen.

Adapted from the United Church of Christ's prayers for racial justice

18 Wake me up Lord, so that the evil of racism
finds no home within me.

Keep watch over my heart Lord,
and remove from me any barriers to your grace,
that may oppress and offend my brothers and sisters.

Fill my spirit Lord, so that I may give
services of justice and peace.
Clear my mind Lord, and use it for your glory.

And finally, remind us Lord that you said,
"blessed are the peacemakers,
for they shall be called children". Amen.

US Catholic Bishops' Conference

19

We confess
that the sin of racial hatred and prejudice
distorts your divine plan for our human lives:

You created us in divine likeness, diverse and beautiful:
In every person, every race is your image.
But too often we fail to recognize your image in all: Forgive us.

You created us in divine freedom, to be free:
In every decision, every choice is your possibility of justice.
But too often we fail to choose to advocate for your justice for all: Forgive us.

You created us for divine abundance, to tend and share:
In every garden, every social structure is your seed of community.
But too often we fail to create that community which includes all,
and gives to all equal access to your abundant life: Forgive us.

Forgive us:
Open our eyes to distinguish good from evil
Open our hearts to desire good over evil
Strengthen our wills to choose good over evil,
So that we may create among us your beloved community. Amen.

Racial Justice Sunday

20

History teaches us when law and justice are perverted, all hell breaks loose after a while.
The cry for justice, whether social, criminal, or economic – must be heard and honoured!
May the God of justice help us even now in the midst of this dreadful coronavirus pandemic
and during this time of social unrest now swiftly sweeping across the land.

This church is called upon never to forget the Scriptural injunction which remains an integral part of the missionary mandate of the church in any age – “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute (Proverbs 31:8). It further elaborates, “Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy” (Proverbs 31:9).

If ever a time the church is called upon to speak out, is today. She must speak up for George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and the so many others whose lives were senselessly snuffed out by those who should have protected them. In the spirit of Jesus, the Church of God denounces racism, sexism, classism, injustice, oppression, institutional racism, systemic oppression and injustices.

We come against and denounce evil in every form and manifestation. We solemnly take a stand to aggressively denounce racial hatred and to seriously act in favour of promoting the sanctity and dignity of every human life. That all are created equal is a very fundamental, authoritative, biblical truth that must not be only preached but lived out in All our daily transactions as the created people of God everywhere.

Our black church and white church and our brown church – all the churches of God must cry out for justice, until there is a just and equal system for all! Too many of us are tired of living in fear, for ourselves and our children, at the hand of law enforcement and all those who should be protecting and serving us! We say enough is enough! Racism in all our institutions must not only be denounced but eradicated! There must be justice for all! As the redeemed people of God we stand up and speak out! Amen.

**Rt Rev Leroy V Greenaway, Presiding Bishop, North East Region
The Church of God of Prophecy (adapted)**

21 We believe God created all people equal in worth and dignity, that differences of gender, culture, race, religion, abilities, sexual identities, are gifts of God for the people of God.

We believe that the nature of God is multi-dimensional and that we are made in God's image.

We believe that the miracle of God's creation is manifested through our many differences.

We believe that to embrace diversity we must empty a place within ourselves so there is room for others.

We believe that our transformation rests in openness to the gifts and perspectives of others.

We believe that to embrace diversity requires an explicit commitment to become a new kind of community.

We believe God's love is perfected in our collective communal experiences as diverse people.
Amen.

**Prayer of affirmation of diversity - written by the Celebrating Diversity Committee
Trinity-St Paul's United Church, Toronto, Canada, 2002**

22 We pray for the people of our nation. May they be generous in their response to the stranger seeking refuge.

We pray for our nation that it may continue to be blessed with freedom, good leadership and responsible citizens.

We pray for everyone that we may continue to welcome with a generous heart the refugees and immigrants.

Australian Council of Churches (adapted)

23 Father of the Heavenly Lights, you brought us to life by your Word of truth,
We were made in your image, sons and daughters of all colours.

The cancerous wickedness of racism has caused your children to suffer.
Prejudice, discrimination, and hatred have led to brokenness, violence and even death.

We confess that we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.
We have allowed the sin of racism to divide us in what we have done and what we have not done; what we have said and what we have not said.

Purify our hearts and tame our tongues, we pray;
Give us courage to repent, to fight for righteousness, and to love and embrace one another...
In the name of Jesus, Our Lord... Amen.

**Rev Rhea Summit, Pastor, New Alexandria
United Methodist Church of the USA**

24 One God, in Three Persons, creator of one human species, in many hues: all who pray to you are descendants of Adam and Eve, all members of one race called "human."

Forgive the blindness that causes our eyes to notice and magnify those things we regard as different from ourselves in others. Teach us to see clearly, that we, your children, are far more alike than we are different.

Help us to put aside the racial prejudices embedded within us, and to see within every person the Child of God you created, our sister or brother, destined for Glory. In the name of One who died for all persons, of all colours, Jesus Christ.

Episcopal Diocese of West Virginia

25 In the face of a stranger...
In the cry of a child...
In the dreams of an asylum seeker...
In the hopes of an economic migrant...
Jesus stands before us.
How will we know him if we never say hello?

In the house next door...
In the shop on the corner...
In the place dedicated to God that we walk past to get here...
In the high street or community hall or the intersections we navigate every day...
Our neighbours live and move and have their being.
How will we know them if we never say hello?

Radical hospitality...
Finding ways to welcome that are more than words...
Breaking down barriers and building bridges,
Loving our neighbours as we love ourselves...
That is what we are called to do.
How can we do that if we do not even say hello?
God your love has no bounds, help us to live your way. Amen.

Church of Scotland

26 Lord God of wilderness, wave and wind,
you travel with the wanderers of the world.

Stay close, we pray, to all who live
with loss, in terror, and adrift,
and spur us on to build a world
where there is truly room for all.

Lord Jesus, you came among us
homeless, and as a refugee.

Shake our complacency,
rekindle our compassion,
and help us challenge our leaders
to forge a common strategy
that is both truly just, and fair.

God, our rock and our redeemer,
We pray for those forced to leave to support families;
We pray for lives torn apart by absence and loss;
We pray for people missing loved ones and home;
We pray for chaplains, pastors and advocates in this context.

May we be willing to share our selves with the stranger in our midst.

**Prayer for refugees
United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (USPG)**

27 O God, we confess our day-to-day failure to be truly a good neighbour.
We confess to you.

O God, we confess that we fail to love extravagantly
because we do not fully understand what loving means
and because we are afraid of risking ourselves.
We confess to you.

O God, we cut ourselves off from those in our communities
and around the world and we erect barriers of division.
We confess to you.

O God, we confess that by silence and ill-considered word.
We have built walls of prejudice.

O God, we confess that we have sought our own security first.
We have blamed others for their struggle for security.

O God, we confess that we have denied the reality of the pain of racism.
Even when it confronts us.

Holy Spirit, speak to us.
Help us hear your words of forgiveness, for we are deaf.
Come fill this moment and show us the path of the Samaritan. Amen.

**United Methodist Church Women (USA)
by Professor Elmira Nazombe, Rutgers University, USA**

28

Dear God,

In the effort to dismantle racism,
I understand that I struggle not merely against flesh and blood
but against powers and principalities –
those institutions and systems that keep racism alive
by perpetuating the lie
that some members of our family are inferior and others superior.

Create in me a new mind and heart
that will enable me to see
brothers and sisters in the faces of those divided by racial categories.

Give me the grace and strength to rid myself of racial stereotypes
that oppress some in my family while providing entitlements to others.

Help me to create a nation
that embraces the hopes and fears of oppressed people of colour
where we live, as well as those around the world.

Help me to heal your family making me one with you
and empowered by your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Sisters of Mercy of the Americas

29

Good and gracious God,
Who loves and delights in all people,
we stand in awe before You,
knowing that the spark of life
within each person on earth is the spark of your divine life.

Differences among cultures and races
are multi-coloured manifestations of Your Light.

May our hearts and minds be open
to celebrate similarities and differences among our sisters and brothers.

We place our hopes for racial harmony in our committed action
and in Your Presence in our Neighbour.

May all peoples live in Peace. Amen.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

30 Help us to dissolve the barriers of race
and work for a just society
in which none are despised and discriminated against
on the basis of false divisions of race
and in which each is valued
for their true humanity.

We ask this in the name of Jesus,
who saw beyond all human divisions
and reached out to the good within each person. Amen.

**From the ecumenical service "Christians United Against Racism"
at the World Conference Against Racism in 2001**

31 Lead us from death to life,
from falsehood to truth,
lead us from despair to hope,
from fear to trust,
lead us from hate to love,
from war to peace,
Let peace fill our heart,
our world, our universe.
Peace, Peace, Peace
Amen.

World Peace Prayer

**Compiled by
Reverend Canon Cynthia Dowdle OBE and Ultan Russell**