



## Racism and the Dignity of the Human Person

In Scripture, God tells us, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you” ([Jeremiah 1:5](#)). God created each one of us, and every person is unique and valuable to God. He has a special plan for each of our lives. He knows what he made us to be.

Because God made each individual person, we should treat each person with human dignity. We are responsible for taking care of our bodies and minds and using them to do good things. We are called to be kind toward others, and solve problems peacefully instead of fighting. If we see someone being disrespected, we are called to speak up and defend him or her, and get help if necessary. It is our responsibility to protect others because every life is important to God.

Every person is created in the image and likeness of God, and is equally precious in the eyes of God. He wants all of us, not just some of us, to be with him forever. Every person is his child, so we are all sisters and brothers.

In their pastoral letter titled “Brothers and Sisters to Us,” the Catholic bishops of the United States reminded us that people of every racial and cultural group are equal in dignity. And as Pope Francis has said, “The Son of God became incarnate in the souls of men to instill the feeling of brotherhood. All are brothers and all children of God.” To treat any one person or group as less than fully equal to ourselves is a sin. Racism divides the human family and goes against God’s plan to make us all one family.

## Equal Human Dignity

Racism has a terrible history in the world and in our nation. It began with the harmful treatment and displacement of many Native Americans by those who wanted their land. It increased with the slavery of Africans. Over time, other people of color were brought to the United States to do hard labor under brutal conditions.

Racism continues today in unequal treatment and lack of equal opportunity for all. It is our responsibility as Catholics to advocate for change that allows

everyone an opportunity to achieve their goals in school and the workplace. Our diversity as humans means that every person brings his or her own God-given gifts to the world, and deserves a chance to share them. Inequalities in schools and workplaces contradict the equal dignity of all God's children and do not contribute to the common good. Therefore, the Catholic Church and her members are called to raise awareness and end these sinful inequalities.

> **What has been your own experience with racism?**

### Personal Action

Write about a time when you saw someone choose to avoid, exclude, or say or do something mean about someone from another race or culture.

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Now write about a time when you or someone you know chose to be with someone from another race or culture or defended that person when others were saying or doing something disrespectful, exclusive, or harmful.

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### Family Action

As a family, identify places or situations in which someone or a group of people are treated unfairly or are not included in a community. It could be in your school, on local TV shows, in textbooks, magazine or TV ads, movies, on the covers of greeting cards, featured in kids' toys, or portrayed disrespectfully in cartoons or on sports teams' logos.

Choose one of the situations, and create a plan to do something about it while maintaining respect for all involved.

