

THE JOHN CARROLL SOCIETY
Archdiocese of Washington

FOR OVER 65 YEARS: LAY CATHOLICS ENRICHING THEIR FAITH & SERVING THE ARCHBISHOP OF WASHINGTON

John Carroll Society
Margaret Mary Missar
High School Essay Competition

2021

1st Place

Essay

God's guidance in resolving the Sin of Racism

In the past year there have been many tensions that have divided the United States. However none seem to be as pertinent today as the same divisions that divided the U.S. in previous centuries. When people hear the word racism, many would associate it with a mindset that being white is better than being black. While this is a partial explanation and would be accepted as a quick definition for racism, the word racism embodies much more. Racism is not only between those who are white and black but also extends to other races - Latinx, Chinese, and Japanese just to name a few seen in the United States alone. It also isn't a single source of hatred, any given person can be just as discriminatory as another of a different race. In addition, there are also stereotypes of races. With these aspects in mind, racism can be more assertively defined as the belief in a substantial difference between races that makes one lesser than another in any capacity. With this definition, we can ask how God leads us to avoid this sin. God calls us to love our neighbor regardless of what they look like. The sin of racism can be addressed through the gifts of the Holy Spirit: specifically wisdom, faith based organizations discussing the issues involved with racism and individuals accepting in their hearts that individuals of different races are brothers and sisters in Christ.

God gave us the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost as stated by St. Thomas Aquinas. These gifts are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. They are meant to guide the understanding and interpretation of the Bible and to help us live the life that Jesus called us to live through the example of His life and His ministry. The first of these gifts, wisdom, shows us how

to address racism specifically. Through wisdom, we gain a deeper insight into God and God's plan for humanity. By merely existing, a thing has dignity because God created all things. If we expand this idea of the dignity of creation then human beings, who are the pinnacle of both creation accounts, deserve the utmost dignity. This level of dignity that is infallible to a person can only be acknowledged and respected by another person.

This is why racism can be seen as a sinful issue: it chooses not to recognize a person's dignity, either in part or full. Respecting the dignity of an individual comes down to loving your neighbor as yourself, a precedent set forth by Jesus as one of the greatest commandments, second only to loving God above all things.

Through meditation and prayer, the gift of wisdom creates a lens through which to view others that creates a common respect and establishes people of every race as being a valued part of creation as a whole, a unity that God intended. The gift of wisdom also reinforces the view of what justice should be for others. Through consistent prayer with the gift of wisdom, true justice starts to become evident. However, with the knowledge of justice, acknowledgement of injustices start to emerge. Knowing the injustice is unsettling for the spirit, it creates a "hunger and thirst for righteousness" (Matthew. 5:6). By having the gift of wisdom active in addressing racism, there is the ability to address common racial injustices without accusing and punishing another race. Rather, a movement to fix the injustice that is present and reform to prevent the injustice in the future is developed because of the mutual respect of the infallible dignity of an individual. Jesus unites us in this way from His Sermon on the Mount where He calls us to be merciful instead of vengeful in recalling actions. As an individual, I can try to keep this mercy in discussing racism in order to keep peace as a primary objective.

This mission would be in line with the Church's calling in addition to what is written on our hearts as morally right.

There have been many reactions to racial tensions in the past year alone, some actions becoming quite hateful and violent. This was due cause for examination into the past of racism and how the Church must guide us going forward. The Pope himself made a statement that Christians are not doing enough to address this issue, "Catholics cannot tolerate racism and also 'claim to defend the sacredness of every human life,' " (Chappell, Bill). This was in response to the death of Mr. George Floyd which was one of the primers for the Black Lives Matter movement during the spring. The leaders of the Church have called for action to be taken.

One such institution that heeded the call in 2020 was Georgetown University's Institute for Catholic Social Thought. They held many seminars addressing the past of the Church with racism along with racism as a whole (Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life). They helped to establish a course of action that should be followed by virtue of being Catholic. They set up a comprehensive course of action that is beneficial to everyone involved, no race being posed as virtuous or being deemed the cause of racism, rather calling individuals to help individuals to be heard. By learning about these actions in a comprehensive and focused way, there is a foundation to build off of for action on racial injustice. Learning about the racial injustices from open discussion pushes people who are indifferent to the subject to act in the social justice movement and fosters the sharing of experiences to further our understanding of family dynamics, friendships, and separation of individuals from a stereotypical framework of race.

By knowing that major organizations like Georgetown exist and are taking action to further unite people against the sin of racism, the prospect of creating similar platforms of open discussion becomes much more significant and brings promise for a more united humanity through seeing individuals. This is a learning phase that may lead to a discomforting feeling, like we are separated from this view of reality. These states of discomfort are good for us to have. They allow for us to address the pains of racism that have been normalized, ignored, and silenced in the past. The Church in particular listening to the burdens of her congregation would allow for a more united community that accepts individuals. By having these open forums to tell one's story, we start to become both more sympathetic and caring for the condition of individuals who are equal in dignity to ourselves rather than an abstract construct of race. This care for individuals in the Church would then foster additional action outside the Church for more individuals who are marginalized to be helped in incremental steps. These can be actions like peaceful marches for change or for formal appeals to the government for specific protections of an individual under the law, minimizing the consideration of race as a factor as much as possible. As I understand it, the Church's ability to unite the congregation through faith and a desire for the love of God and neighbor should make it a prominent leader in the fight to end racism. Therefore, the Church's members need to take it upon themselves to bring individuals with different ways of life and views together in a way that prompts discussion and upholds the respective dignities of the individuals.

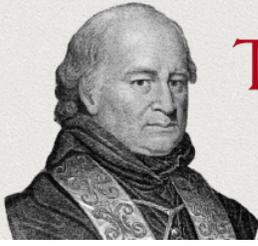
When people allow the Holy Spirit to leave its gifts in their hearts, specifically wisdom, racism ends. When people are able to speak of the issues that they face and

are not just heard but accepted with the objective of finding a resolution the audience can take steps to act on, racism ends. When individuals unite with others through the Church to call for justice and take action in helping the marginalized, racism ends. As Christians we are called to do this. This is the challenge of our lifetime that God has charged us to be part of the solution; let us accept His charge with humility and love, acting towards others as Jesus taught us. Sparing an individual from injustice saves innumerable persons from the effects of the sin of racism. Now is the time for action, to end the sin of racism for all generations, future and present.

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John Carroll Society
Margaret Mary Missar
High School Essay Competition

2021

2nd Place

Essay

March 15, 2021

John Carroll: Prayer

We utilize the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit through our everyday actions and thoughts. The Holy Spirit guides us to loving each member of God's created union through these gifts. The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. This is not a definitive list, but it has the seven primary gifts of the Holy Spirit. We are called to be the glue of the Earth. As Christians, we show the love and compassion for all people including those who lack someone to care for them. Christians make those left out and those who are not in a position of need feel loved alike. We begin to bring the world together, all the while spreading God's love like an infection that heals not harms. We are the cure to the disease that comes from the separation of God's children. Racism is a main cause in this type of separation. Gifts of the Holy Spirit such as Wisdom and Knowledge can be used to combat racism. In prayer, the Holy Spirit guides us to lead, inspire, and incite change in society to better resemble a united Body of Christ in humanity. As God's people, the Holy Spirit invites us to reject America's original sin of racism and live in peace with all of humanity by employing gifts of the Holy Spirit through prayer.

The Holy Spirit leads individuals to God, compelling them to respect the intrinsic value of all people disregarding race. This inherent worth is known as human dignity, and it is present in every human. The Holy Spirit's gift of understanding allows us to comprehend the concept of human dignity. Understanding is the gift that grants the perfection of faith; we can truly find the true magnificence of the faith through this gift. This is the first gift of two that assists us in loving all of God's people. The second gift is wisdom. Wisdom is the gift that gives us the ability to receive insight to knowledge given to us by God that can be applied to specific needs relating to the Body of Christ. By employing these gifts, we can fully understand and appreciate the

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innate value of each human being. Every person of God's creation is called to love one another. The Holy Spirit leads us to reject systemic racism and turn to God. God teaches us to love each other as sisters and brothers. The Holy Spirit urges us on a daily basis to treat people with kindness.

We are inspired by the Holy Spirit to combat racism. The Holy Spirit empowers us with the strength to stand up for all those victimized by racism. We are called in unity under Christ. By compelling all people to make our understanding richer and learn more about the Body of Christ, the Holy Spirit equips us with all the tools we need to fight racism. God gave us our voices and actions to call those away from racist actions including speech. God says he goes before us always. He is with us through every obstacle and issue we face. God is not only there for the undesirable parts of humanity, such as racism, but he is also there for the best parts of our Earthly lives. We feel a strong pull to please God and show him our story through the magnificent sides of our human unity. We strive to turn others toward God; we try to bring as many as possible to him. When we do this, we begin to defeat racism little by little until it's completely gone. Through the gift of wisdom, we can conceive what the world might be like if there was no racism and only unity. This is meant to help strengthen our desires to demolish racism. The ability to imagine a perfect world where all is distinctly created by God and influenced by his love. Humans support each other in incredible, heartwarming ways. God intended this to be the full reality of peace. We work every day to bring ourselves to this reachable haven. The Holy Spirit is there all along, guiding and luring us to delve into God's love. We experience his love, and we share it with all those around us with the hopes of someday creating the absolute peace Jesus incited by his mission. His mission of peace will continue until the end of time.

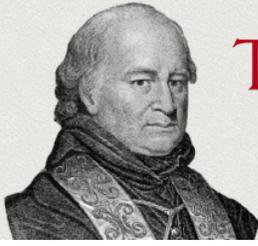
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The Holy Spirit incites us to dismantle racism. Our values as Christians teach us to show compassion and love for all people. Christianity provides a safe, non-judgemental people to support those afflicted by racism. We provide this support using our gift of understanding. We can understand how hard it is to be hurting because of racism, so we provide support. We then use our gift of wisdom to act appropriately by providing what the people who are living in fear due to systemic racism require. As high-school-aged teenagers, we can spread God's love and teach about the Body of Christ by showing solidarity. We present a united front against racism. To do this, we can spread awareness virtually (through social media) or in person. We can safely attend protests to represent Catholics. The best way to incite change in society thus successfully combating racism is to open a majority of peoples' minds to God's love. God's love teaches everyone who experiences it of His greatness and the fundamental greatness of God that lives in all people.

The Holy Spirit calls us to resist systemic racism in society through prayer and the gifts of wisdom and understanding. Wisdom and Understanding help us to see the issues our world faces and act on a resolution. The Holy Spirit guides us by leading, inspiring, and inciting an end to racism through prayer. We prayer for assistance in each situation so we may know God's will and carry it out. Led by the Holy Spirit, we show compassion for those affected by racism. The Holy Spirit inspires us by reaching out through Scripture, Bible verses, other's actions, and other everyday occurrences. It pushes us to carry out God's will and care for His people. By praying about what we can do as individuals to dismantle racism, we are confronted with the answers we need to make the changes. We change our ways to better show solidarity and love for all people individually and it affects humanity as a whole. Each of us needs to turn to God and pray for his

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guidance in our lives. God's plan for us continues to lead, inspire, and incite the changes required in society to finally achieve a loving and accepting society.



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2021

3rd Place

Essays

Throughout history, racism has been a prevalent issue that has divided our country and humanity. Through prayer and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, we can be instruments of change and peace. Racism is America's "original sin" as it has been part of its history since its founding and it is still sadly prevalent today. Racism violates many of Jesus' and the Church's teachings. It divides the human family that makes up the Church and it violates the dignity of the children of God. All humans, regardless of race, are created in God's image and likeness, therefore we are all equal, God did not make any single race superior to another. Through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, we can gain an understanding of each other and work to create a world without injustice.

Through the gift of wisdom, we can understand things from God's perspective and recognize the truth. In terms of fighting against racism, with the gift of wisdom, we will be able to recognize that we are all created equal in the image of God regardless of race or culture. Even though we are all different and have unique gifts, in God's perspective, we are all equal, and through wisdom, all of humanity will be able to recognize that truth. The gift of understanding allows us to not only recognize the truth but be able to fully grasp the essence of the Catholic Church and its beliefs. The Catholic church believes that racism is inherently evil and violates the inherent dignity of the human being. The gifts of wisdom and understanding help us to fully grasp and recognize the prevalence of racism in America and its harmful effects on people of color. A significant issue in the fight against racism is that many people do not acknowledge the existence of racism or the societal structures that are inherently racist and disadvantage people of color, however through wisdom and understanding, we can begin to correct this issue. These gifts allow us to see each other as we truly are, equals made in the likeness of God.

The gifts of piety and awe of the Lord allow us to be more willing to serve God. Through the gift of piety, we not only feel a sense of duty to worship and serve the Lord but we feel a

desire to serve Him as a result of our love for Him. With the gift of awe of the Lord, we understand that our existence is dependent on God. Everything we are is because of God and His perfection. In order to serve and thank God for creating us, we need to show love not only to Him but to all of our brothers and sisters. We can show love to all of our neighbors by accepting our differences and learning to celebrate the things that make us unique including our race and culture. Instead of looking down on certain cultures or races, we should learn more about them by creating events to share our cultures. For example, my school holds an international day where students and teachers share unique parts of their culture and heritage. This year, the presenters, explained about unique parts of their own culture including clothing, holidays, and food. The event provides our community with an opportunity to learn about and appreciate cultures different from our own. By learning more about different cultures, we can begin to eliminate misconceptions and stereotypes based on race, ethnicity, and culture. In addition, to serve and express our love to God, we should support communities and people who face injustice. This may include small actions, like standing up against injustice in daily life, or big actions, like organizing or going to protests to fight for equal rights for people of all races. In my daily life, I can work to eliminate stereotypes about others by researching more about other races and cultures and by learning more about others through conversation.

The gifts of fortitude and counsel can help us to know how to act in difficult situations and gain more courage to stand up for our Catholic beliefs. Through the gift of counsel, we are able to judge and decide the best way to act in situations. The gift of fortitude gives us the ability and strength to stand up for our faith and beliefs even in situations where there could be consequences for standing up for what is right. In situations where I notice injustice, the gift of counsel will help me to know how to defend those who need help in a calm manner and the gift

of fortitude will give me the courage to stand up for my belief that all people are equal, as we are all children of God. For example, in a social situation with my peers, insensitive jokes were made about my race and the race of other minorities. Through the gift of counsel, I almost instinctively knew that I had to defend myself and others as racist jokes should not be treated. With the gift of fortitude, I was able to find the courage to stand up for my beliefs even though I was scared that I would lose friends because I did not agree with their opinions. The gift of fortitude can also help us to gain the confidence to defend others against racism. In my community, there have been several protests supporting the Black Lives Matter movement. Fortitude can help myself and others gain the confidence to participate in these protests to fight for the rights of all people without fear of the consequences that may result. Both fortitude and counsel can allow us to know how to act in difficult situations and have the courage to stand up for the right thing.

By using the gifts of the Holy Spirit such as wisdom, knowledge, piety, the awe of the Lord, counsel, and fortitude, we can eliminate racism, live in full communion with each other, and unite as the Body of Christ. The gifts can lead and inspire us to be instruments of change in our communities and families by helping us recognize that we are equals, allowing us to be more willing to serve the Lord and spread love, and stand up for what is right.

Racism has been a constant issue throughout the world's history, especially in the United States. In the past number of months, most of society have come together in striving to end the discriminatory acts against people of color. Changes have been made in some situations, while in others, there is still an abundance of room for improvement. This much needed change starts with people who will advocate for these minority groups. This can be possible through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Individuals can use these 7 gifts of wisdom, fortitude, counsel, understanding, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord to strengthen themselves to stick up against the "original sin" of racism, bringing humanity closer to living in full communion with each other and uniting.

The first gift is wisdom. Wisdom can be seen as a teaching method or as a way to appreciate our faithful beliefs. Catholics believe that all humans are made in the image and likeness of God, which means that no race, gender, or any other human being is superior to others. The gift of wisdom can assist Catholics in recalling this belief, which they could then use to strengthen themselves when sticking up against racist remarks. Wisdom can also be used in a teaching aspect. Catholics could use their wisdom to educate themselves or others on the problems going on in the world regarding race. Educating others is one of the most crucial pieces of ending racism. If the horrific stories of innocent colored lives being harmed solely because of their race are never heard, there can never be change, because no one would know what to change or how to do it. This vigor to be able to educate and stand up, can both be possible through wisdom.

The gift of wisdom ties in with the gift of knowledge, as they are both very similar to each other. The gift of knowledge is known to allow us to be aware of certain situations or see them from a different perspective. Individuals can take what they've learned from the gift of wisdom, and apply it through knowledge. This relates to the racism issue in the world because,

while white people will never actually experience trauma due to their skin color, they can still try to understand, sympathize, and be an ally for those who have experienced these feelings. They can use the gift of knowledge to try to put themselves in the shoes of colored people and appreciate the white privilege they have. If they see a personal side to the story, and become open-minded, they might feel more passionate about the situation at hand and strive to work against it. Knowing the stories is one thing, but to truly understand what is happening, and the racism rooting these actions, is what will allow for a genuine change. This can be available through the gift of knowledge because it does allow for us to understand, as much as we can, the issues occurring.

The next gift, understanding, is also very closely related to wisdom and knowledge. Understanding allows us to make sense of how Jesus wants us to live as his followers. Because the church teaches that everyone is equal, it is evident that Jesus would not want people discriminating against others because of their skin color. Catholics are able to realize this through the gift of understanding, as it gives them the ability to comprehend the path of life Jesus wants us to fulfill. They can then use the gift to lead themselves and other Catholics away from any racist mindsets, mentioning the fact that it would be against the Church teachings. Understanding not only allows for a better grasp of what Jesus wants us to do, but it can also allow for Catholics to spread this knowledge to others.

The gift of Counsel, also known as Right Judgement, is similar to Understanding in that it allows us to know right from wrong. This gift can help lead individuals towards choosing to do what is right. It can be compared to one's conscience, as both give the ability to choose right from wrong. Catholics can use counsel to choose to do the right thing of standing up to racism and being an ally to minority groups, or the wrong choice of staying quiet, making no change

and further worsening the problem, or even being the problem themselves by being the one discriminating against and stereotyping because of skin color. With counsel, people can choose to do right, which in the long run, would solve the problems.

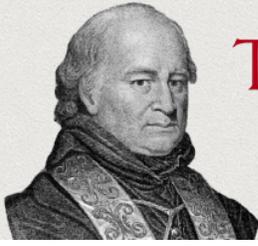
The gift of Fortitude, also known as Courage, can strengthen individuals to overcome the obstacle of fear, making them confident enough to take the risk for the better. Catholics can use this gift to empower themselves to stand up against anyone who is acting in a racist manner. Often, people will be afraid to call out their friend or family because they do not want to risk making their relationship awkward or uneasy, but with the gift of fortitude, it is possible to stand up to anyone. Catholics can stand up for what they believe is right in the name of God and all Church teachings.

Piety, also known as Reverence, gives a sense of respect towards God and the Church. Someone with piety or reverence can acknowledge their wrongdoings and present love. Individuals could use this gift to address and lead the end to racism when they admit to their own faults and grow from these mistakes. There always seems to be some kind of story about someone finding an old post or picture from a famous musician, actor/actress, politician, social media influencer, et cetera, where blatant racism is present. Following this finding, the celebrity issues some kind of apology. While the apologies often seem redundant or disingenuous, they are still showing their piety by presenting some kind of humility, admitting and apologizing for their mishaps. These actions can help the famous individual and their followers to think before they act, which will, in the long run, lead to a decline in various racist acts.

The seventh and final gift of Fear of the Lord, also known as Wonder and Awe, makes people aware of the greatness and perfection of God. People with this gift can see that God is everything anyone's heart desires, and can lead people to wanting to do everything they can to

get to heaven. This can help with racism because if people are willing to do whatever it takes to meet God in heaven one day, they will follow and preach Church teachings, and in this case, the one about equality. This can lead to an increase in Church members and a decline in racism.

Overall, these seven gifts provided to us by the Holy Spirit can guide us and allow for many great things to happen. One of these great occurrences is the road to ending racism. While it might be uncomfortable in some situations, the end result will have made all uneasy feelings worth it. It will probably take a long time until racism is completely washed out, if truly ever. However, with the help of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, Catholics can try their best to help end the horrific and systemic racism that is occurring in not only the United States, but all over the world, through leadership, courage, education, faith, and more. Ending racism starts with change, and that change can happen with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.



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2021

Honorable Mention

Essays

Christian Representation

Like almost every family in the western world, my mother and I cannot wait until the day after Thanksgiving to bust open our Christmas decorations and adorn our entire house with joyful wreaths and baubles that reflect the Christmas spirit. My mother instilled in me the idea that every room in the house should have some reminder of Jesus' birth. Although we cannot help but be excited for presents, snow and Hallmark movies, my family and I are sure to give Jesus the credit for the season. Therefore, we go to church every Christmas morning before our presents are even acknowledged. I remember the Christmas morning of my freshman year; my mother and I were on a path towards our Confirmation in the Catholic faith. We arrived early in our Sunday's best, but instead of sitting down immediately, my mother walked to the front of the church and carefully observed their display of the nativity scene. I thought that this was her simply expressing her love for Christmas decorations, but I was shocked to hear that she was actually looking for representation of people who looked like us in the Christmas figurines- and she did not find any.

When learning about the atrocious cruelty that was the slavery of black people in the Americas, my first thought was "how could someone do that to another human being?" Like most people today, it is impossible to imagine myself living in a society that so blatantly brutalizes black people who were not allowed to defend themselves or their families, and not act. However, I have quickly realized that the systematic dehumanization of human beings relies on stereotypes that permeate its society. The enslavement of African Americans relied on unfair associations that equated blackness with stupidity and savagery, and these false equivalencies are alive and well even today. Dr. Jennefer Witter, a specialist on implicit biases, claims that

exposure to people unlike yourself is the best treatment for prejudice, and representation in the media is a key way to expose others to people of various backgrounds (Witter)..

Representation is a topic hardly talked about in Christian spheres, but that swiftly needs to change. In 2018 survey administered by the Public Religion Research Institute, it was discovered that “white Christians- including evangelical Protestants, mainline Protestants and Catholics- are nearly twice as likely as religiously unaffiliated whites to say the killings of Black men by police are isolated incidents rather than part of a pattern of how police treat African Americans” (Luo). It is baffling that members of a religion that preaches that “you should love your neighbor as yourself,” can ignore systemic injustices that result in the injury and deaths of people of color. Jesus Christ encouraged his followers to proactively fight on behalf of the marginalized, no matter who they are, and if this unconditional regard for others is missing in the church, then the church needs a change. Representation can make or break how an audience perceives racial minorities. For instance, “one study found that nonverbal racial biases in facial expressions and body language, as represented on popular television shows, influence white viewers’ racial biases” (“Why Is Equal Representation In Media Important?"). If poor or inaccurate representation can foster racist views, just and truthful representation can be the key to dismantling the subtle yet harmful belief that Christianity is an exclusively white religion.

There is a troubling trend of people of color abandoning Christianity because of its harmful past which has resulted in an untrue association of Christianity and white supremacy. It is no secret that the most popular justification for American slavery was the introduction of Christianity to African Americans. This fact not only paints Christianity as a tool of white supremacy, but also discredits Jesus’s teachings, for how could an ideology built on compassion for others be in line with a system that degrades other human beings? Well the truth is simple: it

is not in line with that system, but it has been perverted to appear that way. In fact, the majority of the Old Testament along with half of the New Testament was removed from the Bibles that were given to the slaves; the portions that were removed were sections like Exodus, which contained material which could inspire rebellion (Little).. If Christianity in its purest form supported such a barbarous system, there would be no need to remove such large and pivotal sections from the Bible to support that system. This is not the only case where the Bible and its history is not accurately portrayed.

Most people who have grown up in the Church spent their early childhood learning about the Bible through picture books and films that make the Bible's contents easily digestible. While volunteering at my church's faith formation program, I have noticed that, much like the figures of Mary and Jesus that adorn the church, the biblical figures in these books are white. I bring this up not to argue that white people should not be represented, because that is absolutely untrue; however, the almost exclusively white representation in Christian media is extremely unsettling given the fact that the Bible "mentions people from the places now called Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Egypt, Libya, Syria and the occupied Palestinian Territories" (Gee). Biblical figures came from many countries and had different ethnicities, and the Christian media should reflect this fact.

When bringing up race and the Bible, many Christians respond with: "God supersedes race." This is a true statement; however, a "color-blind" attitude is destructive when many white Christians harbor racist or apathetic attitudes and Christians of color feel ostracized. To cure these issues that are plaguing the Church, there needs to be inclusivity to demonstrate that our historic spiritual mentors do not just come from one place. Accurate representation can also teach the lesson the neighbor that Jesus commands you to love should not have to look like you in order to earn your empathy, and Catholic schools are an excellent place to teach this lesson.

Every student at my high school is required to take four years of religious studies, and all freshmen take a course about the Old Testament and all sophomores take a course about the New Testament. In these courses, my classmates and I have done thorough research on the historic context of biblical scriptures. However, Catholic schools can go the extra mile by introducing their students to the cultural context of the scriptures as well and by firmly stating that the Christianity we know today is the result of the work of people from various nationalities and ethnic backgrounds. Projects can be done where students can report on how a specific nation impacted Christianity. This is one of many ways that the Catholic school curriculum can ensure that its students have an accurate understanding of the religion that they subscribe to. This campaign to educate Catholic students about the backgrounds of Biblical figures could also extend to the art room, and students could find creative ways to accurately visualize the figures they have read about. All in all, catholic students can be the first to dismantle the harmful narrative that Christianity is exclusively a white religion.

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As Christians, prayer is a huge part in our faith and relationship with God. By praying everyday, we are able to strengthen our relationship with God. The Holy Spirit has blessed us with seven gifts; wisdom, knowledge, understanding, counsel, piety, fear of the lord, and fortitude. These seven gifts can help to aid us as we fight for an end to racism. These seven gifts can help us address the “original sin” that is racism, and help guide us to become educated and to do better for our black and person of color community.

The gift of wisdom can help us to value God and all of his creations. This gift of the Holy Spirit can help put an end to racism by allowing us to understand that we need to value all of God’s creations, and not discriminate against the black community. By using prayer to understand the wisdom god has given us, we will become able to improve the way we perceive others, and not view white people of more importance. Wisdom can help us to become aware of our actions, and help us to educate ourselves and those around us to put an end to racism.

The gift of knowledge can help us understand what it is like for the black community, and learn about all of their hardships and discrimination. By learning about the difficulties that the black and person of color community has had to go through, we can learn about how we need to change, and how we as a church and community can better ourselves to put an end to racism. We can learn about the hardships and experiences the black community has gone through, and become aware of what needs to be changed. We can help to teach others and ourselves that the black and people of color communities deserve more respect, love, and compassion and they deserve to be treated equally.

The gift of understanding will be the most difficult for us to use to end racism, because I will never truly understand what it is like for the black and person of color community, and I will never be able to understand all of their hardships and discrimination that they have experienced.

By using the gift of understanding, I can do my best to empathize with those who have personally experienced racism and discrimination, and try to understand how I can become better educated and help educate others to put an end to racism. We can use our understanding of right and wrong to speak up against injustices, and treat everyone with equal respect. We can use prayer to ask God to help us to understand how we can help educate our community and the world about anti-racism, and to have the courage to speak up when we see racism.

Counsel is one of the most beneficial gifts from the Holy Spirit to help us advance in our fight to the end of racism. With our knowledge and understanding of racism, we can use the gift of counsel to speak up against racism. We can also use our knowledge of our white privilege to help those who are being discriminated against. Because of our white privilege, we can help to educate other white people, and help them understand when they are being racist, even if they do not realize it. We can help the black and person of color community through counsel by calling out injustices towards them and speaking up for them.

We can use the gift of piety during prayer, to trust in God to help the black and person of color community. We can trust that God has a plan, and will help us to win the fight of abolishing racism, and help the Catholic Church to stop discriminating against them. By using our gift of piety, we can trust in God during prayer that He is looking out for his children in the black community, and will give us all the strength to realize and understand that racism must end for us to grow as a community, church, and nation.

By the gift of fear of the lord, we will turn away from sin. We can use this gift to put an end to racism by turning away from discrimination and turning towards peace and equality. By making the black and person of color community equal, we will be able to strengthen our relationships with one another and with God. Prayer can help turn us away from sin by

strengthening our relationship with God. By using prayer to end racism, God will help us to understand that everyone deserves to be treated fairly and equally.

The gift of fortitude allows us to overcome difficulties and roadblocks within our faith. We can also use fortitude to overcome racism within our community and the church. We can help to end racism by learning about how we can change to end discrimination against the black community and treat them with the same respect that you would treat to any white person. By using fortitude to overcome difficulties within our faith, we will be able to stop racism and discrimination.

By using these seven gifts, we will allow ourselves to become more open minded and help to become better educated with putting an end to racism. Within the gifts of wisdom, knowledge, understanding, counsel, piety, fear of the lord, and fortitude, we can take the steps needed to end racism and become a united community. We can use these gifts to lead the movement of ending racism and inspire others to join in the movement. By inspiring others, we can all help to educate others and continue to educate ourselves on how to become better allies for the black and person of color community, and stand up to any injustices. By using our seven gifts from the holy spirit in prayer, we will grow as a Christian in faith, and grow as an ally and friend to the black and person of color community.

March 15, 2020

Topic One: Pray

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are a very important aspect of faith and play a distinct role in our lives. More importantly, they can be a guide for people to end this issue of racism and bring our world united as one like we are supposed to be. The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. In different ways, each of these gifts will make a difference and put an end to racism if we practice and use them in our daily lives. I am going to talk about a few that stick out to me and how I think they will bring us together like family so racism is put to an end for good. First, I believe that fortitude is so important in the world we live in. We are all entitled to our own opinion and given consciousness to know the right from the wrong. We are called to use our voice and stand up for what's right which takes fortitude. Fortitude can be hard sometimes but when we see something wrong we are always taught to do our best to change it. Racism is not just or okay in any sense so we need to use the fortitude that God gave us to be brave and stand up for what is right and bring awareness to this issue that cannot go on any longer. In school or in your church community, if someone said something that is not okay it is our jobs to say something about it. Now we should never come at someone with hate but reiterating to them that what they have said or done is hurtful to others and cannot keep happening. Being judged for the color of your skin or your ethnicity is never okay and never will be. Use that fortitude that God granted us all to do better and bring peace and change into this world.

Another gift of the Holy Spirit that can help inspire, lead, and direct us to be instruments of change and peace is knowledge. Today and for the rest of our lives we need to be educated on these issues and have knowledge of why this is wrong and will not live in this world anymore. If

we can see and know why this is wrong we will want to change it and will be inspired to go out in that moment to ensure the communities hurt that this will change. We can also use our knowledge to show and enlighten our friends and school to this problem that is horrible and inhumane. It destroys so many human lives and as Jesus taught us that every human life is valued. This needs to be demonstrated in our world and no discrimination can go on because of the color of your skin or your ethnicity or any discrimination or racism at all. We are leaders of peace and change by using our knowledge for good things and educating ourselves more and more each day with all different sources. We take it day by day with knowledge and power and with the knowledge of our brains we can truly do amazing things and I believe that can be instruments of change and peace.

The next gift of the Holy Spirit is understanding. I know how important it is to be understanding of others but I also know I cannot compare myself to others or what they have been through. I know how important it is to be understanding of what people of color went through and still do to this day. I cannot even imagine what it is like to be afraid to leave your house someday and being understanding and even more than that of what they go through will help you see life through a different lens and want to be an instrument of change. Contemplating over what people of color go through and understanding their struggle will inspire you to go out in the world and try to be light at the end of the tunnel. A world like this where people are discriminated against for the color of their skin is a world that will go nowhere. We must understand that and pray that all people will see this and help make the earth a better place. Understanding simply just getting where people are coming from no matter if you do not know what they went through goes farther than you think. Recognizing that you hear them and how

wrong it is is a step in the right direction, and a step that needs to be taken. Not only hearing them but acting on it as well, that will make a difference.

Next, is the gift of counsel. Counsel is the act of receiving assistance and guidance on difficulties. Counsel can help us to inspire, direct, and lead as instruments of change and peace because we can listen to others and not shut them out, and hear what they have to say even if we disagree. We want to be instruments of change and peace and that may mean we have to listen and want to change. We need to put ourselves in a motivated mindset so we can do everything in our power to come in union with one another. If we make a mistake or have made a mistake that has hurt someone of color or someone of a different ethnicity etc we need to accept and own up to that mistake. We should accept counsel and teaching from others so we can avoid that mistake again. Everyone is here to help but we have to be open minded to counsel and to learn. We are children of God and called to learn from our peers at school or in our community. For example, if we are being taught in school how to avoid unfair treatment and discrimination we cannot come out with a bad attitude and hate. It is our job to want to be peacemakers and change but if you do not accept and want the counsel or guidance we will never get anywhere. Also, praying every day will keep you in a good relationship with God so he can counsel and guide you to the life we are called to have not a life where people are judged and killed for the color of their skin. Some people struggle to recognize the fact that they need counsel but it truly can only bring out the better. Contemplating what you did was wrong and then seeking counsel makes a bigger difference than you might see. All the gifts of the Holy Spirit can lead, inspire, and direct us to be instruments of change and peace, but these ones stuck out to me the most. God created them for a reason and during this time that is so unjust is so many ways these gifts need to be practiced more than ever. We can do better. We will do better. We must do better.