

## Long-Lasting Sin of Society

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) on November 14, 2018, approved the formal statement, *"Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love, A Pastoral Letter Against Racism."* The full body of bishops approved it by a vote of 241 to 3 with 1 abstention. It is with confidence that this author can assume some Eastern Catholic Bishops voted in its favor.

Bishop Shelton J. Fabre, of Houma-Thibodaux, Chairman of U.S. Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism and Chair of the Sub-committee on African American Affairs within the Cultural Diversity Committee, issued the following statement:

"The entire body of bishops felt the need to address the topic of racism, once again, after witnessing the deterioration of the public discourse, and episodes of violence and animosity with racial and xenophobic overtones, that have re-emerged in American society in the last few years. Pastoral letters from the full body of bishops are rare, few and far between. But at key moments in history, the bishops have come together for important pronouncements, paying attention to a particular issue and with the intention of offering a Christian response, full of hope, to the problems of our time. This is such a time."

Racism is simply one group of people thinks that it is better than another group of people either because of color or ethnic origin. It has a modern cousin called sexism, where it is said that men are better than women. You can today combine the two into what is called "white privilege."

While the solution is: our Lord calls us to love, this article is an attempt to look at the cause.

As with everything else, the cause goes back to the sin of Adam and Eve, expelled from Paradise, having lost the divine likeness and nature and their will weakened. As *Christ—Our Pascha* (154) explains: "Sin injures relationships among people, introducing alienation and opposition between man and woman... After the Fall, the relationship between man and woman became

subject to impulsive physical urges. As we read: "Your desire shall be for your husband." The desire to subordinate others to oneself also comes into play: "[your husband] shall rule over you" (Gn3:16)."

The roles between husband and wife were changed from equal, loving partners to a subject to be protected and guided. This then was expanded into the father-daughter relationship.

When the fundamental human relationship of the family changed, it had a direct impact on all relationships. As *Christ—Our Pascha* (157) notes: "Sin destroys fraternity among humankind, as when a brother becomes a stranger and an enemy to his own brother (see Gn 4:1-16, about Cain and Abel). Sin introduced disorder into society and gives rise to vain efforts to build a society without God (see Gn 11:1-9, The Tower of Babel). However, the great expectations of human pride end only in great disillusionment, malaise, confusion, and misunderstanding: 'Skillfully have you planned to build a tower, O my soul, and to establish a stronghold for your lusts; but the Creator confounded your designs and dashed your devices to the ground. (*Ode 2 of the Great Canon of St Andrew*)"

Some lives in this disordered society became more important than others. Not only could people be killed but also they could be enslaved. This led to discussions of the value of life throughout the ages. Some lives were worth more than others, which is why some slaves cost more. In our contemporary period science fiction authors addressed this question. Edwin Charles Tubb wrote a novella, *The Captain's Dog* (1958) in which a captain was given a dog to kick so that he would not take his anger out on the crew. Society had developed androids. Since they were not human they became the kicking dog for the ship's crew until "Andy," the android started reading poetry. In 1968 Johnny Speight wrote a play "If There Weren't Any Blacks, You'd Have to Invent Them," dealing with racism by color. We may no longer have slaves that we treat as sub-humans and kick around, but there seems to be part of humanity's fallen nature that needs to feel superior to someone or some group. This

superiority is rooted in the sin of Pride, as was the first sin.

History has shown us the two reactions of people when they freed from slavery. In the Exodus story, we see the plagues, as punishment for enslaving the Jews, and the other would be the treatment of the slave owner with dignity and compassion since they were sinners. In our contemporary society we see the pride of sexism, and now with the #MeToo Movement, we see some who want ALL males punished and others who want to see males, especially the young, to be educated.

Neither of these reactions will bring about the necessary healing because they do not address the core problem. Humanity has fallen into sin. Healing began with the salvific action of Jesus on the cross. The doctrine of recapitulation is the answer.

With the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of the Incarnate God, a process has begun. Our Lord suffered and died to unite humanity as a group to Himself. Salvation is not primarily individual but rather collective. As we sing at Baptisms, "all of you who have been baptized have put on [the person of] Christ." When we put on Christ, we, like Him, "lower ourselves." We live His will rather than our own. We renounce a life of pride. We see things as He sees them, as St Paul tells us there is neither slave nor free; male or female.

We may say that we love God, but if we do not love our neighbor, we are hypocrites. From the ancient tradition of the Jews, Jesus reminds us to love our neighbors as ourselves. Our neighbor can never be less than ourselves. Our neighbor is a person in the image of the God whom we love. The cure to racism and sexism it to remove pride from our lives, to put on Christ, join with Christ and let Him transform us in the likeness of God. This transformation does not happen overnight because we have allowed sin to grow within us. This is a process. So each day, we lower ourselves and with unceasing prayer become closer to God, becoming God, so that we love in our neighbor what we love in Christ. The answer lies in loving God in our neighbor.

*Fr Jonathan Morse*