



Poverty and Racism: Overlapping Threats to the Common Good August 24, 2021

Dear Member of the JustFaith Network,

We are grateful that you are a part of our JustFaith community. Whether you are a graduate of one of our programs or you are just getting to know us, we hope this offering will help sustain you spiritually and equip you to work for justice.

Our bi-monthly resources are sent the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month; you can access an archive of past resources by logging into your JustFaith account. You can use these resources for personal reflection, or you can invite your friends, family, Sunday School class, or current or past JFM small group to join you in-person or via video conferencing. If you are new to video conferencing, Zoom tutorials are available on our YouTube page – [Click here to access.](#)

While we hope that these twice-monthly resources will inspire and sustain your community while distancing, now is also the perfect time to start one of our regular programs. This resource highlights themes found in JustFaith Ministries' three programs on domestic poverty (JustFaith) and three programs on racial justice. For more information, click [here](#); scroll down to the squares labeled "JustFaith" or "Racial Justice," and click on one of the options.

Note: If you are doing this resource with a small group, be sure to send out this [link](#) to the Catholic Charities USA publication discussed in this resource and invite members of your group to read the article before you come together. This publication is a little longer than some; please encourage your participants to leave ample time to read and consider.

Last but not least, all of our work is a collaboration with people like you. When you donate, your gift helps us sustain and equip individuals committed to making the world better. [Click here to help out.](#) Also, please feel free to forward this resource to friends and family!

With gratitude,

The JustFaith Ministries Staff



Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

When everyone has dialed in, begin your time together with these or similar words:

Welcome, friends! It's so good to be with all of you. Today we'll begin with an opening prayer and spend a few minutes checking in with each other. Then we'll have some conversation around the publication you read, before closing in prayer. Most importantly, though, this will be a time to care for one another and to be the community we're called to be.

Let's take a few seconds of silence to pause, to listen to our breathing, and to be present in this space.

Pause for 30 seconds before beginning the opening prayer. In advance, assign someone to read aloud the following prayer:

Prayer for Racial Healing

God of justice,

In your wisdom you create all people in your image, without exception.

Through your goodness, open our eyes to see the dignity, beauty, and worth of every human being.

Open our minds to understand that all your children are brothers and sisters in the same human family.

Open our hearts to repent of racist attitudes, behaviors, and speech which demean others.

Open our ears to hear the cries of those wounded by racial discrimination, and their passionate appeals for change.

Strengthen our resolve to make amends for past injustices and to right the wrongs of history.

And fill us with courage that we might seek to heal wounds, build bridges, forgive and be forgiven, and establish peace and equality for all in our communities.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

- [Catholic Charities USA](#)



Check-In Time (10 minutes or so)

Ask these open-ended questions. If you are by yourself, journal about them.

Note: If you are with a group, these questions have the potential to take up a lot of time. Some weeks may require more check-in time than others, depending on the needs of the group. To provide a shorter yet meaningful check-in time, choose ONE of the questions below, and ask participants to share a ONE sentence response.

- **Before we begin this week’s reflection, let’s take a few minutes to check in. How is everyone feeling?** (It will be a bit more difficult via phone to know if someone is being talked over or is trying to get a word in.... Be sure everyone has a chance to speak).
- **What is something you’re struggling with this week?**
- **Where have you seen a sign of hope this week?**

Other optional questions include: What is something you’ve learned about yourself during this time of social distancing? Where have you experienced a “thin place” in the last week? Where have you seen beauty this week? What is one new behavior you’d like to continue doing when the virus has passed us by?

Reflection (25 minutes or so)

Members of your group should have read this short publication: [Poverty and Racism: Overlapping Threats to the Common Good, A Catholic Charities USA Poverty in America Issue Brief](#)

Invite responses to a few of these questions:

1. **What surprised you in this document?**
2. **How do you see racism manifested in our society today?**
3. **How do you understand “white privilege”? Has it impacted your life?**
4. **What changes in our laws and systems are needed to reverse the legacy of racism?**
5. **What can you do to pro-actively confront racism?**
6. **What does “racial equality” mean? How might you promote it?**
7. **Does your faith impact your understanding of race?**



Announcements (5-10 minutes)

- This resource touches on the topics of racial justice and poverty gives just a taste of a much larger exploration that is possible. For a more robust experience, consider one of our Racial Justice programs, found [here](#); scroll down to the square labeled “Racial Justice.”
- JustFaith Ministries is celebrating its 20th Anniversary in the month of September with four special Zoom events on the first four Thursdays of the month. For more information, go to the JustFaith [website](#).
- The resource we read today was issued by Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA), the national association of 167 Catholic Charities agencies throughout the US and US territories. For more on how Catholic Charities has responded to the matters of racial justice, see this link: <https://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/magazine/charities-usa-vol-47-no-4/>
- Let participants know that the materials for this gathering were free, put together by the JustFaith Ministries staff to equip more people for the work of peace and justice. To support the creation of more resources and programs, participants are encouraged to donate to JustFaith Ministries through [justfaith.org](#).
- Are there any opportunities for action or advocacy happening in your community this week? Invite participants to share ways to support the work of local groups working for justice or care for the environment.

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Then say: **Before we join in the closing prayer, let us pause to acknowledge the presence of the Holy Spirit, who is as close as our very breath.**

Pause for 30 seconds. Then offer the intercessions below. A leader or leaders may be designated to voice the individual petitions; the entire group offers the response.

In hope that the arc of history bends toward justice, we lift up our prayers for racial healing, saying: ***Bind us together, O God of love.***

For the Church, that its prophetic voice may proclaim to all the challenge to break the hopeless cycles of poverty, ignorance, prejudice, and despair which degrade the sacred dignity of humankind, we pray: ***Bind us together, O God of love***



For our country, that we might celebrate our racial diversity and the distinctive and rich contributions of every fiber of our cultural fabric, we pray: *Bind us together, O God of love*

For wise and decisive action on the part of local and national leaders, that the scandal of racism may be eradicated from our society, we pray: *Bind us together, O God of love*

For an end to the subtle racism of economic oppression which permeates our society's structures and resides in many hearts, we pray: *Bind us together, O God of love*

For our faith communities, that they may not succumb to indifference or accept the status quo, but press on for fundamental change, we pray: *Bind us together, O God of love*

For the victims of racial discrimination, that they may be filled with hope for a more just future, healing from wounds received, courage to advocate for change and for peace, and the grace to overcome hatred with love, we pray: *Bind us together, O God of love*

For those who work for racial justice, that they may be sustained in hope, empowered with courage, and filled with the grace to persevere in love, we pray: *Bind us together, O God of love*

Jesus our brother, You revealed God through your wise words and loving deeds, and we encounter you still today in the faces of those whom society has pushed to the margins. Guide us, through the love you revealed, to establish the justice you proclaimed, that all peoples might dwell in harmony and peace, united by that one love that binds us to each other, and to you. *Amen.*

- [Catholic Charities USA](#)

Then, in these words, invite any participants who have a prayer, a concern, or a request to briefly share it:

We are disciples on a journey.

We are the body of Christ, broken for the world.

We hold one another as we carry the concerns of our neighbors.

If you feel moved, please share your prayer aloud.

Leader: We pray also for the members of the JustFaith community across the country. Unite us through the power of your Holy Spirit, that together we might participate with you in the building of your Kingdom, in order to create a more just and peaceful world. Amen.