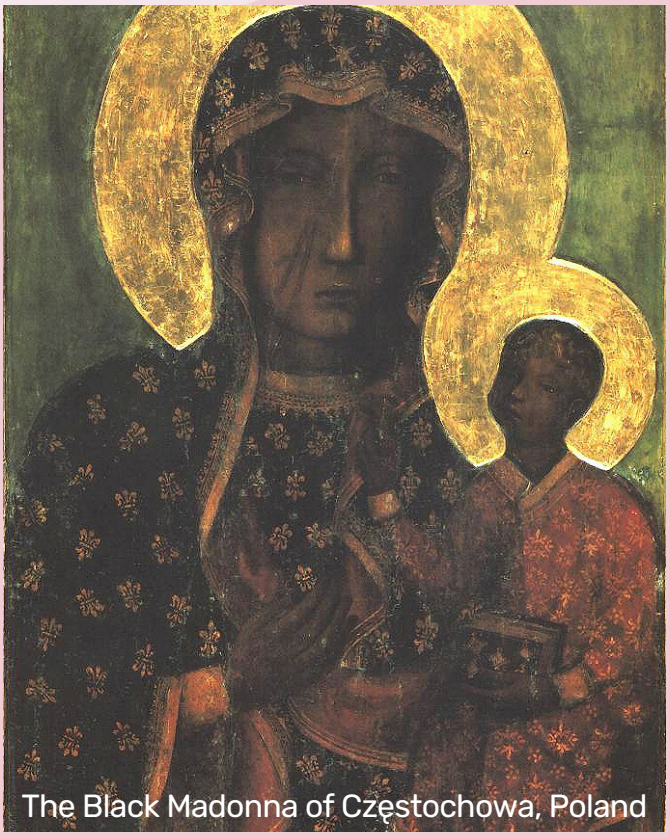
Racial Justice in Parishes

'In Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith' (Galatians 3:26-28). It is God who gives us our highest and deepest purpose: to be one with Christ and to live forever with him. Our Christian identity thus surpasses that of any earthly label, as St Paul reminds us:

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:26-28)

The Church is called to tackle prejudice in all forms, and this worksheet will help to identify ways in which a parish can work towards a just culture for people of all races and ethnicities.



The Black Madonna of Częstochowa, Poland

"Racism is a virus that quickly mutates and instead of disappearing goes into hiding and lurks in waiting"

Pope Francis, Fratelli Tutti, 97

"With respect to the fundamental rights of the person, every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, colour, social condition, language or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent. For in truth it must still be regretted that fundamental personal rights are still not being universally honoured."

Gaudium et Spes, 29

"Instances of racism continue to shame us, for they show that our supposed social progress is not as real or definitive as we think."

Pope Francis, Twitter, May 2021

DO JUSTICE | caritas social action network | ONE RACE • THE HUMAN RACE carj Catholic Association for Racial Justice

A LISTENING EXERCISE

Synodal Process and Learning from One Another

Parishes should welcome the synodal process, where people from all backgrounds feel they are able to attend. If there are people you feel are less likely to take part in a listening session, make a special effort to invite them face to face when you see them in the parish or out in the community.

How to host a listening exercise

Atmosphere

Pick a location which is accessible for people in your parish, work to create an environment which feels welcoming and calm. You may consider offering to start the session with a meal or refreshments. Perhaps one or a number of the participants may be willing to cook to help people feel at ease and to start to build an atmosphere of trust and familiarity.

As this is a group exercise, set up the chairs and tables in a way that allows people to look at each other face to face, this creates an environment where people may feel more likely to express themselves, and to be listened to.

Questions

It may help the facilitator of the session to have a few questions at hand to help guide the conversation.

1. What is your personal experience of being a member of this parish?
2. Do you feel you belong?
3. Do you feel that you are able to participate in the various ministries in the church and take on positions of leadership? (use as appropriate)
    a. on the Parish Council?
    b. As catechists?
    c. on the Finance Committee?
    d. in the choir?
4. Do you feel that there are opportunities for you to express how Catholicism is practiced in your country or your cultural background?
5. Do you feel that your culture is represented in the statues, windows, pictures, books etc. in the parish? How do you think this could be altered?

The Method of *Conversation in the Spirit

Begin with a few moments of silence to allow ourselves to ponder the question.

Round one: Each person has a chance to speak. There is no discussion in this round, and there is a time of silence to allow for reflection.

Round two: Share what struck you most or what resonated for you in the first round and what moved you during the time of silence. Once again this is followed by a pause for reflection.

Round three: Finally in the third round participants reflect on what moved them most deeply. What new insights arise? What are the common themes or fruits of the conversations?

Taking on feedback
Members of the group may share some personal and upsetting stories. Encourage the group to listen in a spirit of charity (with generosity, giving the benefit of the doubt). It is vital that confidentiality is upheld.

Working towards a more racially just parish:

Confirmation Groups: Work towards representing the life of saints that come from all cultures and backgrounds, and highlight how the church has operated and continues to do so globally. Identify the common ground between these saints, and how they can inspire us to live as saints today.

Catechists: Catechists may want to research apparitions of Our Lady in countries that might have a relationship with the adults or children in your group. For example: Our Lady of Vailankani, who appeared in Tamil Nadu, India or Our Lady of Kibeho, who appeared in Rwanda, Africa.

Repository: You may want to consider having goods in the repository that reflect the diversity of your parish including cards, statues, and books.

Parish groups: Your parish Caritas or Justice and Peace group may want to spend time looking at the different issues that face people of different cultural and ethnic background in your community. You may want to work together on addressing these issues at the root cause.

Your parish may want to have cultural groups or events that celebrate the incredible breadth of how the Church looks across the world. You may want to consider hosting an international Mass where parishioners are able to read bidding prayers, or sing songs from their experience of Church.

You may want to host a celebration afterwards that allows parishioners to share in the joy of a truly universal Church and body of Christ.

**- Taken from School for Synodality's Conversation in the Spirit - https://static1.squarespace.com/static/645a53a276ee0b44a34c2ff2/t/65b3aabb033be574c000b696/1706273487230/Conversations+in+the+Spirit+v2.pdf*