



BISHOP OF GARY

Day of Prayer and Fasting for Peace in Our Communities and an End to Racism: Feast of Saint Peter Claver, Wednesday September 9

September 4, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As our nation continues to be confronted with racial tension and civil unrest, we might be tempted to believe ourselves powerless to respond. However, we can all respond on a personal level – and that personal transformation can lend itself to communal engagement. We seek the Lord’s mercy for our own sins, and we join our prayer and fasting as acts of repentance and reparation. With hearts renewed, we then ask the Lord to inspire us to become beacons of hope and light to others. We start with ourselves, and then ask the Lord how we can be a channel of His love and mercy to a hurting world.

As a pathway to renewal, I ask the faithful of the Diocese of Gary to join with me and dioceses across the country on September 9 for a Day of Prayer and Fasting for Peace in Our Communities and an End to Racism. This is a significant date because it is the Feast Day of Saint Peter Claver, a Jesuit priest who lived from 1580-1654 and ministered to slaves as they arrived on the slave ships in Columbia. He is the patron of interracial justice and African Americans.

I will begin Wednesday with a 7 a.m. Prayer Service at the Cathedral and follow with the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. The Cathedral will be open to the public, offering visitors the opportunity for Adoration and prayer, from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. when Fr. Surufka, administrator for the Cathedral, will conclude the day with Benediction at 5 p.m. and Mass at 5:30 p.m. I welcome everyone to sign up to attend the day’s activities or, if you are unable to attend in person, to view the livestream. Links for the livestream and sign-up for the day’s activities are available through the diocesan website, dcgary.org.

Bishop Shelton J. Fabre of Houma-Thibodaux, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism offered his perspective on what we are trying to accomplish on this day:

“In the midst of our country’s ongoing racial unrest, we restate our commitment to peacefully seeking racial justice. ... We reiterate the value of those whose human life and dignity in this country are marginalized through racism and our need to fight for them including the unborn. [On September 9, a day of fasting and prayer], we urge Catholics to consider attending the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and offer your participation in reparation for sins of racism to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. We invite the faithful to also consider praying the rosary, the USCCB’s Prayer Service for Racial Healing, and for the intercession of the saints who have fought for racial equality such as St. Katharine Drexel and St. Peter Claver. We must continue to engage the battle against the current evils of our society ...”

As we prepare for this day of prayer and penance, I offer the following USCCB examination of conscience in light of the sin of racism, asking ourselves:

1. Have I fully loved God and fully loved my neighbor as myself?

2. Have I caused pain to others by my actions or my words that offended my brother or my sister?
3. Have I done enough to inform myself about the sin of racism, its roots, and its historical and contemporary manifestations? Have I opened my heart to see how unequal access to economic opportunity, jobs, housing, and education on the basis of skin color, race, or ethnicity, has denied and continues to deny the equal dignity of others?
4. Is there a root of racism within me that blurs my vision of who my neighbor is?
5. Have I ever witnessed an occasion when someone "fell victim" to personal, institutional, systematic or social racism and I did or said nothing, leaving the victim to address their pain alone?
6. Have I ever witnessed an occasion when someone "fell victim" to personal, institutional, systematic or social racism with me inflicting the pain, acting opposite of love of God and love of neighbor?
7. Have I ever lifted up and aided a person who "fell victim" to personal, institutional, systematic or social racism and paid a price for extending mercy to the other? How did I react? Did my faith grow? Am I willing to grow even more in faith through my actions?

Join with me in prayer that the Holy Spirit will move among us, to give us hearts of repentance, so that we may become the people and the community of faith the Lord want us to be. Let us look into our hearts and ask for the will and the strength to help contribute to the healing of racism in our time.

Thank you for keeping me in your prayers and know of my love and prayers for you. If I can pray for you specifically, please share your request through email at pray@dcgary.org. You may also send a prayer request through the diocesan website at www.dcgary.org.

Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us.

Jesus, I trust in you...

Your Servant,

The Most Reverend Robert J. McClory

Bishop

Diocese of Gary