

February is Black History Month, a time that reminds us of the achievements and struggles of African Americans in the United States. It is also a time, as a church, for us to contemplate what it means for the United States to be afflicted by what our bishops have called its original sin: racism

Our faith compels us to oppose racism, which is a distortion of the Catholic view of the human person as created in God's image and likeness. Recently, the U.S. bishops released a powerful call to action in their pastoral letter on racism, *Open Wide Our Hearts*, asking Catholics to "face courageously the vice of racism... reach out generously to the victims of this evil, to assist the conversion needed in those who still harbor racism, and to begin to change policies and structures that allow racism to persist."

Racism affects the lives of millions in this country, including many of us Catholics, through unjust immigration and criminal justice policies and through the ways that it tears apart our communities along the lines of color and ethnicity. The community immediately outside the walls of St. Ignatius is no exception: 2017 and 2018 saw two very public racist incidents at Boston College that both disheartened and rallied students to seek responses from their community. We recognize that these incidents are not isolated but rather part of our culture, locally and nationally. We also recognize that these cultural attitudes make it harder to evangelize: How do we preach about human dignity in God's image within a society where so many adhere to racist ideas, consciously or unconsciously?

We, the Racial Justice Committee of the Peace, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission, in conversation with the Pastoral Council and our Pastor, Fr. Joe, seek to respond to these realities in a public way by displaying a banner outside of our church

that challenges racism in our community. The U.S. bishops remind us: "too often racism comes in the form of the sin of omission, when individuals, communities, and even churches remain silent and fail to act against racial injustice when it is encountered." We invite you to discern with us the message our banner should convey. We will gather at 4:30 p.m. in the Friary Room on Sunday, March 10th. We hope to see you there.