



RACIAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE UPDATE

On Sept. 9, 2020, The Most Rev. Michael C. Barber, SJ, Bishop of the Diocese of Oakland, announced the formation of the Diocese of Oakland Task Force for Racial Justice, which he charged with addressing the issues raised by systematic oppression and racism, with an initial focus on the African American People of God in the diocese.

The Task Force was formed shortly after the violent killings of African American men and women during that previous year. After prayer, study, interviews and discussion, the Task Force offered some initial recommendations to Bishop Barber and continues to work with diocesan leadership regarding these issues. The Task Force is led by Father Leo Edgerly Jr., pastor of Corpus Christi Catholic Church in Piedmont. The Task Force has met regularly since 2020 and has made strides in several areas. Recognizing that racial and social justice requires work toward tangible results, the group identified specific areas of concentration and established committees aligned with those goals and purpose.

EDUCATION

The Education Committee of the Task Force has worked with the superintendent and assistant superintendent of Catholic schools of the Diocese of Oakland to develop programs and changes in curricula that reflect the historical reality of racism in our country and our Church.

JustFaith activities have been present in the diocese for 20 years and link parish conversations with school conversations based on Catholic Social Teaching.

The Committee has divided up the task of educating the diocese regarding the sin of racism into four parts:

1. Adult parishioners of the diocese:

A small pilot of seven to 10 parishes is preparing to take the JustFaith series of programs regarding racism.

2. Students of the diocese:

Several meetings have been held with the superintendent of the schools of the Oakland diocese to develop a training plan for both the staff and the students. A small pilot project has been done with the students at Our Lady of Grace School in Castro Valley. The program is based on JustFaith materials.

3. Young adults and College

Students: Plans are to develop the JustFaith programs at Saint Mary's College and Holy Names University.

4. Introduction of the JustFaith programs

at the local theological graduate schools and St. Patrick's Seminary is taking place and is being supported and assisted by Bishop Barber.

PASTORAL CARE

Reestablishment of an African American Catholic Pastoral Center remains a primary focus of the work of the Task Force, and the Pastoral Care Committee continues to work with Bishop Barber towards that end by laying the groundwork with events and outreach efforts of awareness throughout the diocese.

In March 2021, with the support of Bishop Barber, members of the Task Force collaborated with the Office of Continuing Education for Priests in bringing two all-day workshops for the priests of the diocese showcasing the presence and ramifications of systemic racism within the Church, followed by introductory educational workshop on how to identify and combat normalized actions of racism.

Eighty-eight priests participated to hear witness presentations by Bishop Gordon Bennett, SJ and Bishop Roy Edward Campbell Jr., who shared their personal experiences of racism within the Church and how we might approach methods of healing and restoration.

Over the past year, the Task Force facilitated listening sessions during which African Americans in the diocese shared with Bishop Barber their personal experiences of racism within the Church.

Following these poignantly moving moments, a statement of recognition and support regarding these and similar experiences was developed jointly by Bishop Barber and the Task Force. It was read by Bishop Barber at St. Columba Church during Black History Month in 2021. The Task Force will continue to work with Bishop Barber to develop a more comprehensive Pastoral Letter on Racism in the Diocese of Oakland.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

A Social Justice Committee of the Task Force was formed to identify and partner with other diocesan ministries and parish leaders and Bay Area equity and inclusion organizations toward creating broader sustainable community change in the East Bay. The Task Force welcomes the input of anyone interested in this work, including joining the Task Force as a member. ✝



PAGE 6: Father Leo Edgerly Jr. and Bishop Michael C. Barber, SJ discuss Bishop Barber's apology, as a representative of the Catholic Church, for racism faced by Father Augustus Tolton and his family, and for racism faced by people in the Diocese of Oakland. This is a screenshot from the video, which can be seen at <https://vimeo.com/718859873>.

PAGE 7: After the performance of "Tolton: From Slave to Priest" at the Cathedral of Christ the Light in Oakland, Bishop Michael C. Barber, apologized for racism faced by Father Augustus Tolton and his family. "I also apologize to anyone here who has suffered any form of racism from members or official representatives of the Catholic Church in your lifetime. Some of you have shared your experiences at listening sessions with me," he told the audience. "Amen" could be heard in the cathedral at the conclusion of his statement. This is a screenshot from statement; the stage lighting and cathedral lighting affect the quality of the image.