

**Background**  
**Celebrating Marianist Hospitality:**  
**A Pledge to Renounce the Sin of Racism and**  
**Welcome the Gift of Cultures in Our Midst**  
*(Edited from materials prepared*  
*by the Marianist Social Justice Collaborative)*

The Marianist charism, which our founders - William Joseph Chaminade, Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon and Marie Thérèse de Lamourous - have bequeathed to us and which we treasure in our hearts, strengthens us to build communities of gospel life. The Lord has called us to reverse the evil of racism as we build Marianist communities within the Body of Christ based on dignity and respect for each individual.

Racism is a personal sin and a social dysfunction rooted in the idea and practice of domination of one group of people over another. As a dysfunctional social system, racism is a powerful negative force that divides the human family. Even when racism is not intentional, the results are the same to the victims as if it were deliberate. It can involve prejudice and the use of religious, social, political, economic, cultural and other institutional powers to keep one race in a superior position. At this moment in history, the white race is in this privileged position.

Our Marianist Family in North America lives and functions, for the most part, separated from the Black, Hispanic and Asian communities and other communities of color. Historically we have had few people of color in North America in the Marianist Family. We recognize and confess that we often have not understood, appreciated and invited people of color into the Family of Mary. We, therefore, recognize the call to conversion needed to change our Family situation.

The Catholic Bishops of the US proclaimed:

Racism is a sin that divides the human family, blots out the image of God among specific members of that family and violates the fundamental human dignity of those called to be children of the same Father. (*Brothers & Sisters to Us: U.S. Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Racism in Our Day*, 1979, 3)

Today, our better understanding of the nature of racism gives us opportunities to undo structures and attitudes that separate us and replace them with communities that unite. We see the need to grow in understanding the nature and value of culture and in appreciating our own personal cultural heritage and that of others. The American melting pot process often deprives us of our own cultural richness and the valuable cultural differences that we could otherwise bring to our communities.

We pledge in our communities, schools, parishes and formation centers to:

- recruit, invite and welcome Blacks, Hispanics, Asians and other people of color into our midst;

- break the pattern of silence and the fear of acting against racism;
- preach and teach the understanding and acceptance of ethnic diversity to replace an otherwise culturally impoverished environment;
- assist the Marianist Family to heal and liberate itself from patterns of denial about racism and to take a stand against it;
- develop programs that assist those we work with to recognize racism and to tell the truth about it in their families, workplaces and institutions;
- provide in-depth means for both individuals and our communities to learn about our own cultural heritage and that of minorities;
- ensure pastoral dialogue on this matter and persistent hard work to develop greater cultural solidarity.

With God's blessings and our Marianist gifted heritage, we will prevail. We want to make our own the statement of Pope John Paul II, who said, "We will not live with the sin of racism any longer. Racism must end now."