

RACISM EXAMEN

Call to Worship:

Leader *In the name of our God who shares divinity with us.*
All ***We seek your life in us.***

Leader *In the name of our God who shares humanity with us.*
All ***We seek your presence in our world.***

Leader *In the name of our God who unsettles and inspires us.*
All ***We seek your transforming action in our lives.***



Introduction

If you are white and where born and raised in America, you are a racist. That may seem like a very harsh statement, but it is true. “To understand racism, we need to first distinguish it from mere prejudice and discrimination. Prejudice is pre-judgment about another person based on the social groups in which that person belongs... Discrimination is *action* based on prejudice... When a racial group’s collective prejudice is backed by the power of legal authority and institutional control, it is transformed into racism, a far-reaching system that functions independently from the intentions or self-image of individual actors.” (*White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo, pages 17-18.) America was founded on the ideals of religious freedom and class equality. At the same time, the American economy was based on the capturing and enslavement of people from Africa, the removal and killing of Indigenous people, and the addition of lands from Mexico. The domination of one group, those who were superior and white, over anyone who was not white and therefore must be inferior has been the basis of the American social and economic system. Let’s see what Scripture invites us to.

Scripture

Do not take revenge on anyone or continue to hate him, but love your neighbor as you love yourself. I am the Lord. (Lev. 19:18)

(Pause)

Make the tent you live in larger; lengthen its ropes and strengthen the pegs! (Isaiah 54:2)

(Pause)



Jesus replied, “The most important commandment is this: ‘Listen, Israel! The Lord our God is the only Lord. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second most important commandment is this: ‘Love your neighbor as you love yourself.’ There is no other commandment more important than these two.” (Mark 12:29-31)

(Pause)

This is no new command I am writing you; it is the command which we have had from the beginning. This love I speak of means that we must live in obedience to God’s commands. The command, as you have all heard from the beginning, is that you must all live in love. (2 John 5-6)

(Pause)



Reflection

Over the years, there have been attempts to confront the effects of white racism in America and some surface changes have come about. But the fact is, if you are a person of color in the United States you will have to work harder and still may not have the same benefits that our economic and social system provides to those of us who are white. This is true whether we are talking business, banking, housing, education, health care, recreation. We can say that we are not racist, that we do not see color, that we treat everyone equally, that we have friends or work with people of color, that we denounce white supremacy. But what happens deep down inside of us when we see a person of color before our consciousness kicks in? We may not be able to change the societal structures that maintain racism by ourselves but we can change ourselves and the part of the world we live in.

Examen

- Am I willing to consider that I have taken on the white racism of our American society?
- What is my first reaction when I walk down a street and see several young black or Latino young men?
- If you got on a bus and had the choice of sitting next to a white woman or a woman of color, where would you sit? Was that your first reaction?

(pause in silent reflection)

Response: (sing if you wish)

Grant to us, O Lord, a heart renewed. Recreate in us your own Spirit, Lord.

Examen

- Have you ever been in a group where you were a racial minority? How did it feel?
- When you telling a story or relating an event, do you identify people involved by the color of their skin?
- If you are present when racial jokes or comments are made, what is your reaction – silence, take part in the joke, say that you do not approve?

(pause in silent reflection)

Response: (sing if you wish)

Grant to us, O Lord, a heart renewed. Recreate in us your own Spirit, Lord.

Sharing:

In what ways does our ASC charism call us to work toward antiracism in our own hearts, community, churches and country?

What moves within you?

How and where does the spirit lead you?



Contrition: **Psalm 51** (*Psalms for Praying: in Invitation to Wholeness* by Nan C. Merrill)

1. Have mercy on me, O Gracious One, according to your steadfast love;
According to your abundant kindness
forgive me where my thoughts and deeds have hurt others.
Lead me in the paths of justice, guide my steps on paths of peace!
2. Teach me, that I may know my weaknesses, the shortcomings that bind me,
The unloving ways that separate me, that keep me from recognizing your Life in me;
For, I keep company with fear, and dwell in the house of ignorance.
Yet, I was brought forth in love, and love is my birthright.
1. You have placed your truth in the inner being; therefore, teach me the wisdom of the heart.
Forgive all that binds me in fear, that I might radiate love;
cleanse me that your light might shine in me.
Fill me with gladness; help me to transform weakness into strength.
Look not on my past mistakes but on the aspirations of my heart.
2. Create in me a clean heart, O Gracious One, and put a new and right spirit within me.
Enfold me in the arms of Love, and fill me with your Holy Spirit.
Restore in me the joy of your saving grace, and encourage me with a new spirit.
1. Then I will teach others your ways, and prisoners of fear will return to You.
Deliver me from the addictions of society, O Healer of souls,
keep me from temptation that I may tell of your justice and mercy.
2. O Gracious One, open my lips and my mouth shall sing forth your praise.
For you do not want sacrifice; You delight in our friendship with You.
A sacrifice most appropriate is a humble spirit; a repentant and contrite heart; O Merciful
One, receive our gratitude and love.
1. Let the nations turn from war, and encourage one another as good neighbors.
O Blessed and Compassionate Friend, melt our hearts of stone,
break through the fears that lead us into darkness, and
Guide our steps toward the way of peace.

Closing Prayer

Creator of All That Is, we know that you have made each human being in your image and likeness, yet we find ways to build separations based on superficial traits that allow us to feel and act superior. Forgive us for the times we devalue those who are different from us, especially when it is unconscious. Give us strength to live the ideals of diversity, equality and inclusion that we profess and to work as we can to change the societal structures that continue to oppress our brothers and sisters of color. AMEN

"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

Martin Luther King, Jr.