



ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD
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OFFICE OF
THE ARCHBISHOP

September 2/3, 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

If you ever have the opportunity to participate in a big Papal Mass or Audience in Rome you will experience something joyful and positive not only for this world but also the world to come; namely, unity in faith and worship with people of every race and nation, language and culture, all brought together in Catholic unity around the Successor of St. Peter.

Jesus died on the cross “to bring together the dispersed children of God.” He taught that everyone is our “neighbor.” Our mission as a Church is to be a living “sign and instrument” of communion with God and the unity of the whole human race. The devil, on the other hand, is a divider of people, a sower of discord and hatred, resentment and prejudice.

We all need to be concerned, and also very vigilant, about the diabolical seeds of division and hatred that are springing up, or finding renewed growth, in our country today on the basis of race and ethnicity.

Harboring prejudices is part of a sinful fallen world, but as St. Paul says, we have been “called out of darkness into light.” We have been given the grace of Christ to overcome the fear of the “other” as some kind of threat to us and to “our own kind.” As we grow in faith, we learn not to act on the prejudices we may have formed, at times subconsciously, during life, but strive instead to see and embrace each person as a beloved daughter or son of God.

The implementation of the pastoral plan for the Archdiocese is a graced moment for us to be models of “unity in diversity.” The Catholic population of Connecticut is increasingly diverse in race and ethnicity. It is not a question of one replacing or displacing another, but rather of living, worshipping and working together in a mutually respectful and enriching way. If Jesus Christ reigns in a community and the hearts of its people, then there is no “other” against whom prejudice is justified, but only a community of “one heart and one mind.”

I am happy to say we can find inspiring examples among our parishes in the Archdiocese. One of these came to light in the recent merger of the Portuguese and Brazilian communities at the two Our Lady of Fatima Parishes in Hartford and in Waterbury. Despite their common language, these two nationalities were distant from each other as a result of an historical cultural bias. Their unification was tentative at first, but the deep faith which had nourished them in their homelands has led them to greater reconciliation and communion in Christ. Members of both parishes praise their pastors, Fr. Jorge and Fr. Eurico, both of African descent from Angola, who have accompanied their parishioners with sensitivity and have been models of deep Christian charity toward all.

Much is being said and written right now, and rightly so, about the ugly threat of racism and ethnic prejudice in our country. If we are truly people of Catholic faith, then we will be part of the solution and not the problem. May we work and pray in that spirit.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Leonard P. Blair
Archbishop of Hartford