

This Pastoral Letter comes out of the long-standing and continuing concern of the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago over the pervasive and destructive influence of racism in our society. It is one of a series of efforts of the Council to address this concern, both within our various religious constituencies and within the community at large.

The Reverend Dr. Paul Rutgers,
President, CRLMC

Covenant of Confession and Promise

- You and I belong to the same God.
- You and I live in God's world.
- You and I belong to each other.
- You and I have let our world slide into brokenness of home, of community, brokenness of care, of justice, brokenness of peace and hope.

Therefore, we now declare in the presence of God:

- that we are responsible for each other.
- that we will open our arms to one another.
- that we will repair this broken world.

For we believe and declare with the
prophet Malachai:

*"Did not one God create us?
Why do we break faith
with one another?"*

A list of programs and resources
to combat racism is available from
The Council of Religious Leaders
of Metropolitan Chicago.

Write the Council, in care of
The Rev. William Cober
163 Cedarwood Court
Palatine, IL 60067

**"YOU SHALL
LOVE THE
LORD YOUR
GOD with all your
heart, and with all your
soul, and with all your
strength, and with all
your mind;
AND YOUR
NEIGHBOR
AS
YOURSELF."**

Deuteronomy 6:4-5
Leviticus 19:18
Luke 10:27

PASTORAL LETTER ON RACISM

The Council of Religious Leaders
of Metropolitan Chicago

November 1993

We speak as members of The Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago.

We are religious leaders from the Christian and Jewish communities who joined together in 1984 to seek racial justice and harmony in this metropolitan region. We seek in our fellowship to discover ways in which we can faithfully act in God's name in this particular place at this particular time to address the sin of racism.

We speak in obedience to the God of history who creates all of humanity in God's image and calls women and men of all races, tongues and nations to seek a city where justice flows down as water and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. (Amos 5:24)

We speak confessionally as racial injustices continue to rise in our communities and institutions. Racist speech and actions are more open and tolerated now than they have been in recent decades.

We believe that racism is the intentional and unintentional use of power to isolate, separate and exploit people based on the color of their skin, and that in a predominantly white society, racism hurts all people of color who hold minority status. We believe racism hurts everyone regardless of one's racial or ethnic origin.

We speak as those who are pained by the following manifestations of racism that continue to divide, isolate and fragment us one from the other:

- increase of hate crimes in neighborhoods schools and universities
- discriminatory acts of residential block-busting and racial steering that result in segregated neighborhoods
- disproportionately higher rejection of home loans for Blacks and Hispanics

- economic inequality that discriminates against people of color and contributes to decline in the quality of life: poverty, inadequate health care, infant mortality, family breakdown, drug and alcohol abuse, violence and crime

- loss of jobs that set racial and ethnic groups against each other
- segregation and inadequate funding for schools.

In light of these realities, we recognize:

- the need to continue conversations that clarify the issues,
- the need to move for dialogue among Americans of African, Asian, European, Latino, Middle Eastern, and Native descent,
- and the need to face and combat racism in the religious and civic culture of Chicago.

We therefore call every member and congregation to a renewed faith in the mutuality God intends, and to an increased commitment to stem the tide of racism in our multiracial and multicultural society.

Indeed, we challenge ourselves, our congregations, and our communities throughout metropolitan Chicago to seek new ways to welcome the gifts of people of every racial and ethnic heritage.

We begin to do this together when we:

- affirm that the God of creation has called all of humanity equally into being, without limitation or discrimination based on race or ethnicity (Gen. 1:27),
- thank God in worship and in our devotional life for the diversity of the human family,
- identify the attitudes, policies and practices within our institutions, including our religious communities, that discriminate racially, and work to transform them,

- seek and develop ongoing opportunities for the mutual sharing of diverse histories, experiences, cultures and spiritual gifts,
- participate actively in the political process on behalf of public policies which result in greater justice, equality and unity,

- and when we create groups within our religious communities for study and action to combat racism in metropolitan Chicago.

We deplore all events that confirm the racial crisis in our country. We commend those community groups who are meeting to raise issues and propose actions. Our abhorrence of the violence in our world impels us to move together.

We therefore, in covenant with one another and in the presence of God, call for people of faith to join us in the following actions:

- Read this letter in all places of worship.
- Deposit funds from religious institutions in African-American banks and other minority financial institutions that commit themselves to investing in their neighborhoods.
- Help to organize or participate in local groups for study and action against racism.
- Host celebrations of another culture in parishes and congregations. Invite people from that culture to help plan and carry out the program.
- Support curricula in our schools that reflect the multicultural diversity of our society.
- Oppose any racial rhetoric used by candidates for elected office.
- Offer weekly prayers in all of our places of worship for racial and social justice.
- Promote efforts to change metropolitan Chicago's patterns of segregation.