



## Diocese of Austin

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Office of the Bishop

October 17, 2017

My Dear Brothers and Sisters:

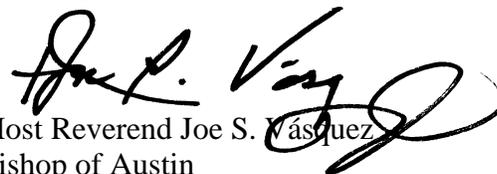
Almost 40 years ago, the Bishops of the United States wrote a Pastoral Letter on Racism. In the document, the bishops articulated the fact that “Racism is a sin: a sin that divides the human family, blots out the image of God among specific members of that family, and violates the fundamental human dignity of those called to be children of the same Father.” This summer, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops established an Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism to focus on addressing the sin of racism in our society, and even in our Church, and the urgent need to come together as a society to find solutions.

As you may know, I was appointed as a consultant to this committee. This past spring, we held an interfaith prayer service for peace in our communities at Saint Ignatius Parish. Before these initiatives, the work to empower people to restore racial harmony had already begun as a result of Courageous Conversations sponsored principally by the Social Justice Ministry of Holy Cross Parish in Austin. Courageous Conversations has helped to raise awareness of violence and racism within communities, and to meaningfully consider the frustration people feel—particularly those who feel marginalized because of race or ethnicity.

As bishop of this local church, I encourage you to continue the dialogue brought about by Courageous Conversations, working to unite and heal our communities by unpacking the presence of systemic racism. We must continue to pray for the conversion of all people to safeguard the inherent dignity and value of every human life by breaking down the dividing walls of hostility. Our communities need us to continue to build bridges to heal our land by bringing about opportunities for meaningful encounter.

Be assured of my prayers for you and your families as we endeavor to make God’s love more present, unity more visible, and justice more real. As we sow the seeds of dialogue among our brethren, may we continue to grow in grace, seeing and embracing each person as a cherished son or daughter of God.

Sincerely in Christ,



Most Reverend Joe S. Vasquez  
Bishop of Austin