

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In our Metropolitan Cathedral there is a statue to St Martin de Porres. He is one of many saints of colour and is known for his saying “Always consider others as more holy and more worthy than you”. He provides an insight into how we should live out our lives of faith, but also an example of diversity in the Catholic Church.

The diversity I see in our cities and our parishes brings such a richness. But it also brings challenge. Challenges that we sometimes ignore. Racism can be one of these, and it saddens me to know that people continue to experience racism as part of their day to day lives, and that it even exists within the Church.

Liverpool continues a long tradition of welcoming peoples from all over the world. This can be seen in our parishes as new communities fill our churches. This is something to be proud of and to be celebrated.

But so often we fail to live up to Christ's calling to welcome the stranger. We can become confused by the changes we experience, and even fearful of our feelings and reactions. We don't know what words to use. We feel embarrassed to challenge a racist comment.

We feel conflicted, and we don't like conflict. As a result, it becomes easier to stay silent. New people joining our parishes can then feel invisible to the leaders and the parish community.

Racism starts when someone thinks their own race is superior. This may be knowingly or not – but the result is that they judge people from other races or ethnicities as inferior and unworthy of equal regard. This can lead people to exclude, ridicule, mistreat, or unjustly discriminate against persons on the basis of their race or ethnicity.

Racist acts violate justice and are therefore sinful. They reveal a failure to acknowledge the human dignity of the other. A failure to recognize the other person as the neighbour Christ calls us to love (Mt 22:39).

So, my invitation to you is to ask for God's grace and assistance, to grow in love for your neighbour, to create welcoming parishes, and to help create a more just and inclusive Church.

I invite you pray to about this issue and reflect on where you are is this – whether you are white, black, brown...man or woman...from the Archdiocese or newly arrived. We all have a role to play in challenging racism....“we are all one in Christ” (Gal 3:23).

I encourage you in your parishes to continue the synodal journey, to understand the experiences of all the baptised. Have conversations about racism and its impact.

I invite the clergy and the laity in our diocese to begin to do something practical to celebrate the diversity in our parishes. To also think about the images and statues we use and how they can better represent our communities.

The Archdiocese will also continue this journey. We want to listen to the voices of those affected and help them tell their stories. This will help inform our next steps across our parishes and schools.

If we are to truly honour the Saints like Martin de Porres and St. Peter Claver, and there are many others, we need to continue to challenge the injustice of racism – both in our thoughts and actions. So, we ask of them and the Blessed Mother Mary, help us in this task. May their intercession guide us in the wisdom and mercy of the Lord Jesus.

Malcolm McMahon OP, Archbishop of Liverpool

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RdVyvxQRpDw>