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Racism is a grave [sin](#). It is an affront to human dignity and respect for life, an impediment to the [peace and reconciliation](#) to which Jesus calls us. It is the original sin of the United States. It is a sin that manifests itself in many different ways in many different places throughout the world. In addition to overt acts of violence, it is inextricably linked to economic and educational inequality, legal inequities, political marginalization, and a host of other social sins. The killing of George Floyd and many others reminds us that, [in the words of the National Black Sisters' Conference](#), if the United States "is to reclaim its moral stature, we must confess and atone for our original sin or America will self-destruct as a nation."

Racism is a virus that continues to infect the United States and the Catholic community; it "[is not a thing of the past \[but\] a real and present danger that must be met head-on.](#)" It can be met head-on by acknowledging and repenting for the times that the Catholic community in the United States has been complicit in racism and its illegitimate progenies, directly, and through silence and inaction. We can also be inspired by the times when the Catholic community and our nation have succeeded in contributing to domestic interracial understanding, racial justice, and racial reconciliation.

Acknowledging our sins and our successes lead to the same end: putting our faith into action. Now. As the *Knights of Peter Claver and Ladies Auxiliary*, the only black Catholic fraternal order in the United States, [declares](#), "the ink has run dry on writing statements, and it is now time to write laws, to write policies, to write sentences." In a similar vein, *Reynold Verret*, president of Xavier University of Louisiana, the only Catholic historically black university in the United States, [urged his students](#): "Let us not be misled by those who urge us to destroy. Let us act for justice, walk prudently, focusing righteous anger and pain toward right action."

The Catholic Peacebuilding Network seeks better to understand and promote the mostly untold and unheralded work of Catholic artisans of peace around the world. These peacebuilders understand the many dimensions of living our faith commitment to protect life and to promote justice, peace, and reconciliation. The first step is understanding, an understanding that comes from [humble listening](#), especially to those from marginalized communities.

Racism and racial injustice need not define America the way it has for half a millennium. Animated by an abiding hope in God's mercy and grace, even the original sin of racism can be overcome by the faith-inspired work of artisans of peace.