

INFO ALERT 149

January 8, 2019

"Love compels each of us to resist racism courageously. It requires us to reach out generously to victims of this evil, to assist in the conversion needed in those who still harbor racism, and to **change policies and structures** that allow racism to persist." *("Open Wide Our Hearts," USCCB p. 18)*

Education: Racism: In total agreement with the USCCB unequivocal statement *that racism is a life issue*, Bishop George V. Murry, SJ, bishop of Youngstown, Ohio, describes this moment in the church's history as an opportunity to do three things:

1. to acknowledge the church's past contributions to the evils of racism
2. to ask forgiveness of one another
3. to commit to living in community by speaking the truth and reaching out to one another in a spirit of reconciling love and solidarity

As indicated in past Info Alerts, racism has many aspects--personal, communal, structural, spatial, and environmental racism. Let's consider environmental racism. Environmental racism is a term given to the pattern of linking pollution and privilege. The poor and powerless most directly bear the burden and suffer disproportionately from the harmful effects of pollution. Note just a few injustices resulting from this environmental racism:

1. Out of every 5 African and Latino Americans, 3 live in areas w/abandoned toxic waste sites.
2. Forty-six percent of USA housing units for the economically poor, mostly people of color, are within a mile of factories that reported toxic emissions to the Environmental Protection Agency
3. Asthma and air pollution are linked. African American populations are concentrated in cities that failed the EPS air quality standards. African Americans and Latinos are almost three times more likely than Caucasians to die from asthma *(source: Srs. of Mercy of the Americas)*

Immigration: *(Justice for Immigrants National Conference Dec. 5 - 7, 2018, Arlington, VA.)*

As stated in our last Info Alert, two of our sisters attended this conference as members of the Phila. Archdiocesan group. We hear some good news from that conference. Led by Pope Francis, the global Catholic Church has taken a stand on the support, protection, and accompaniment of immigrants and refugees. In the U.S., the Catholic Church has been a strong voice supporting immigrants and refugees while sharing institutional expertise to help with programs throughout the country.

Facts: There are an estimated 68.5 million forcibly displaced persons worldwide, including 16.2 million people who were newly displaced in 2017. This represents an urgent humanitarian challenge, requiring collective action by government and civil society (and certainly by people of faith). Currently the Church supports refugee protection and well-being, refugee resettlement and assists in their integration.

Also, **human trafficking threats** around the globe and in our backyard were shared, as well as the Church's work in combatting this horrific form of slavery, that often preys on immigrants.

Encouraging is the report from the Texas border that so far this year, 145 religious women have responded to the call for help with those inhumanely detained at the border by serving in the work of simple tasks, such as cooking, by being present in any ways needed for whatever time they can give.

Prayer: *Lord Jesus Christ, who offered fresh sight to the blind and freedom to captives, help us to break down the barriers in our community. Enable us to see the reality of racism and bigotry. Free us to challenge and uproot it from ourselves, our society, our world. (John Bucki, SJ)*

Action: Together, we IHM's must ask ourselves, What is the change we foresee in ourselves, in our congregation, from this year-long focus on racism? We must admit that "without collective action, the focus becomes at best, a theory, and at worst, pious platitudes." *(Posed by Mark Clarke in "Collective Transformation in an Era of Change")*