

# **Listening session will share experiences of racism in the Catholic Church**

Three months after Archbishop William E. Lori published his second pastoral reflection on racism, the Archdiocese of Baltimore will offer an April 29 listening session at Notre Dame of Maryland University in Baltimore to present the firsthand experiences of invited speakers who have faced racism in the Catholic Church.

Designed as an initial step toward implementing measures to confront racism, the 7 p.m. listening session will provide a “prayerful, safe environment” to listen and reflect on the reality of racism in the church, both past and present, said Mary Ellen Russell, director of community affairs for the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

Audience participants will be invited to share written input on suggestions for how the church can confront racism in the church and the wider community, Russell said.

“The main hope we hear expressed over and over again is that our dialogue won’t just be talk, but lead to concrete action,” said Russell, a member of the archdiocesan work group on racism that formed at the time of the publication of the archbishop’s pastoral reflection.

In his January 2019 letter, “The Journey to Racial Justice,” Archbishop Lori said the archdiocese would promote training and resources to discuss and address racism.

The archdiocese will examine the diversity of its institutions, parishes, schools and social service programs, he said, enhancing efforts to further diversify where needed and strengthening existing efforts to attract new church members and candidates for priesthood and religious life from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Russell said there will also be a focus on the systemic instances of racism in the wider community.

“We have an obligation as a Christian and Catholic community to work collectively to

change the undeniable racial disparities that exist in our social structures – in education, healthcare, criminal justice or any other aspect of society,” she said.

The listening session, co-sponsored by the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the U.S. bishops’ Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism and Notre Dame of Maryland University, is similar to others being held across the country following the U.S. bishops’ adoption of a pastoral letter against racism, passed during their November 2018 meeting in Baltimore.

Bishop Shelton J. Fabre of the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux, La., chairman of the bishop’s Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism, will be among the listeners at the Baltimore event. Archbishop Lori and Baltimore Auxiliary Bishops Mark E. Brennan, Denis J. Madden and Adam J. Parker will join him.

Bishop John Ricard, S.S.J., bishop emeritus of the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee, Fla., and a former auxiliary bishop of Baltimore, will also be present.

The listening session, which will conclude with a brief reception, will be held at LeClerc Auditorium on the campus of Notre Dame of Maryland University.

Those planning to attend are encourage to RSVP [here](#).

*Also see:*

The Journey to Racial Justice: Repentance, Healing and Action

The Enduring Power of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s Principles of Nonviolence

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