

Understanding Marist School's

Diversity Statement

Introduction

If the Marist School community is to respect diversity it must first understand that diversity is the gift from the God who created us all and, therefore, made us His children, for we are “made in the image of God.” He made us men and women, young and old, of many races, with differing histories and cultures, etc.

As a school, Marist is and should be a *learning* community, that is, we should continually grow in our knowledge of what is true and good.

What follows are some expectations that Marist School has for those in its community regarding respect for the diversity that exists both inside and outside of the school. These expectations are then referenced to sources based Scripture, the Teachings of the Catholic Church, and the spirit and traditions of the Society of Mary

Building a community that respects diversity is an ongoing challenge. Marist School sees this document as a work-in-progress too. From time to time new sources and new references will be added to help us appreciate and respect more and more the richness that diversity brings to Marist School and to society.

Age

Marist School expects all students, faculty, and staff to respect and treat with charity all with whom they deal. Adults will treat students with dignity even while recognizing that they are in a role of supervision and leadership. Students are to treat teachers with that same dignity and respect. Older students are expected to treat younger students with kindness and respect and to serve as models of our Marist School virtues of inclusion and welcome.

U. S. Catholic Conference:

“Blessing of Age,” Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops (Pastoral Letter), November 18, 1999:

With length of days I will satisfy them. . . .
(Ps 91:16)

Experts on aging often speak of three phases of later life, corresponding to ages (1) 65-74, (2) 75-84, and (3) 85 and older. By 2030, about seventy million Americans, or 20 percent of the population, will be over 65. The number of older persons in some ethnic populations will increase at an even faster rate. Many older people exclaim, "I never expected to live this long."

Our society is aging. Nevertheless, society still values youth over age, doing over being, individualism over the common good, and independence over interdependence. Stereotypes about aging persist, despite the growing numbers of healthy, active seniors in our parishes and communities. Significantly, three in four persons aged 65-74 and two in three of those 75 and over say their health is good to excellent. While individual seniors vary in their abilities, health, and emotional outlook, the perception of aging as a period of unrelenting decline and withdrawal from society is simply untrue.

Identify your own image of older persons.

If it is mostly negative, please look around you, especially in your own family and parish. Do you see older relatives who are still very much part of family life, whether attending a grandchild's game or recital, counseling an adult child, or hosting the family's Thanksgiving dinner? Do you see older parish members who proclaim the Word, teach the children, or present the annual financial report? Do you see homebound persons who make a daily offering of their prayers and limitations? We ask you to see these older persons as God's gift to you and to the entire faith community. Talk with them, learn from them, and draw inspiration from them. They can show you a whole new perspective on growing older.

Some Other Sources of Reference:

1. Pontifical Council for the Laity, *The Dignity of Older People and Their Mission in the Church and in the World* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1999).
2. Pope John Paul II, *Letter to the Elderly* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1999).

Gender

Saint Paul says that, through Christ Jesus, all God's children are called to equal dignity: Neither male or female, Jew or Gentile.

In 1976, Marist School became a coeducational school. Since then it has been the policy to ensure that the student population approximates as closely as possible a 50-50 balance of male and female.

It has also been the policy to be sure to seek out women candidates for both teacher and staff positions at all levels in the school.

Female athletic opportunities are promoted no less than are male opportunities.

Teachers, staff, and students are expected to both act and speak in a way that works to drive out sexism and sexist language from wherever it exists at Marist School.

A Certain Way: An exploration of Marist Spirituality by Fr. Craig Larkin, S.M.

A Marian Church (p. 80):

(I)t is easy to see what a significant change could be made in this society and Church by a group of people – including men – who live by the spirit of the woman Mary, and who in a very real sense honour the feminine within themselves. In this sense it becomes very enriching to speak of “a Marian Church” or “a Church with a Marian face.”

...A Marian Church is a Church which makes a choice for compassion over competition; an option for relationship over dogmatism; for humility over power; of service over dominance. It is a Church which pushes the boundaries to include all, rather than one which defines its boundaries to contain the chosen. And it is a Church which includes the feminine in its attitudes, which can too easily become over-masculine.

LETTER OF POPE JOHN PAUL II TO WOMEN

I greet you all most cordially, women throughout the world!

I am writing this letter to each one of you as a sign of solidarity and gratitude on the eve of the Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in Beijing this coming September.

Before all else, I wish to express my *deep appreciation* to the United Nations Organization for having sponsored this very significant event. The Church desires for her part to contribute to upholding the dignity, role and rights of women, not only by the specific work of the Holy See's official Delegation to the Conference in Beijing, but also by speaking directly to the heart and mind of every woman. Recently, when *Mrs Gertrude Mongella*, the Secretary General of the Conference, visited me in connection with the Peking meeting, I gave her a written *Message* which stated some basic points of the Church's teaching with regard to women's issues. That message, apart from the specific circumstances of its origin, was concerned with a broader vision of the situation and problems of *women in general*, in an attempt to promote the *cause* of women in the Church and in today's world. For this reason, I arranged to have it forwarded to every Conference of Bishops, so that it could be circulated as widely as possible.

Taking up the themes I addressed in that document, I would now like to *speak directly to every woman*, to reflect with her on the problems and the prospects of what it means to be a woman in our time. In particular I wish to consider the essential issue of the *dignity* and *rights* of women, as seen in the light of the word of God.

This "dialogue" really needs to begin with a word of thanks. As I wrote in my Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*, the Church "desires to give thanks to the Most Holy Trinity for the 'mystery of woman' and for every woman—for all that constitutes the eternal measure of her feminine dignity, for the 'great works of God', which throughout human history have been accomplished in and through her."

This word of thanks to the Lord for his mysterious plan regarding the vocation and mission of women in the world is at the same time a concrete and direct word of thanks to women, to every woman, for all that they represent in the life of humanity.

Thank you, *every woman*, for the simple fact of being *a woman*! Through the insight which is so much a part of your womanhood you enrich the world's understanding and help to make human relations more honest and authentic.

I know of course that simply saying thank you is not enough. Unfortunately, we are heirs to a history which has *conditioned* us to a remarkable extent. In every time and place, this conditioning has been an obstacle to the progress of women. Women's dignity has often been unacknowledged and their prerogatives misrepresented; they have often been relegated to the margins of society and even reduced to servitude. This has prevented women from truly being themselves and it has resulted in a spiritual impoverishment of humanity. Certainly it is no easy task to assign the blame for this, considering the many kinds of cultural conditioning which down the centuries have shaped ways of thinking and acting. And if objective blame, especially in particular historical contexts, has belonged to not just a few members of the Church, for this I am truly sorry. May this regret be transformed, on the part of the whole Church, into a renewed commitment of fidelity to the Gospel vision. When it comes to setting women free from every kind of exploitation and domination, the Gospel contains an ever relevant message which goes back to the *attitude of Jesus Christ himself*. Transcending the established norms of his own culture, Jesus treated women with openness, respect, acceptance and tenderness. In this way he honoured the dignity which women have always possessed according to God's plan and in his love. As we look to Christ at the end of this Second Millennium, it is natural to ask ourselves: how much of his message has been heard and acted upon?

Yes, it is time to *examine the past with courage*, to assign responsibility where it is due in a review of the long history of humanity. Women have contributed to that history as much as men and, more often than not, they did so in much more difficult conditions. I think particularly of those women who loved culture and art, and devoted their lives to them in spite of the fact that they were frequently at a disadvantage from the start, excluded from equal educational opportunities, underestimated, ignored and not given credit for their intellectual contributions. Sadly, very little of women's achievements in history can be registered by the science of history. But even though time may have buried the documentary evidence of those achievements, their beneficent influence can be felt as a force which has shaped the lives of successive generations, right up to our own. To this great, immense feminine "tradition" humanity owes a debt which can never be repaid. Yet how many women have been and continue to be valued more for their physical appearance than for their skill, their professionalism, their intellectual abilities, their deep sensitivity; in a word, the very dignity of their being!

The Church sees in (the Blessed Virgin) Mary the highest expression of the "feminine genius" and she finds in her a source of constant inspiration. Mary called herself the "handmaid of the Lord" (Lk 1:38). Through obedience to the Word of God she accepted her lofty yet not easy vocation as wife and mother in the family of Nazareth. Putting herself at God's service, she also put herself at the service of others: a *service of love*. Precisely through this service Mary was able to experience in her life a mysterious, but authentic "reign". It is not by chance that she is invoked as "Queen of heaven and earth". The entire community of believers thus invokes her; many nations and peoples call upon her as their "Queen". *For her, "to reign" is to serve! Her service is "to reign"!*

May Mary, Queen of Love, watch over women and their mission in service of humanity, of peace, of the spread of God's Kingdom!

With my Blessing.

JOHN PAUL II

From the Vatican, 29 June 1995, the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul.

Religion

Marist School, while maintaining the teachings of the Catholic Church and the spirit of Marist Fathers founder, Jean-Claude Colin, welcomes students and families from Catholic backgrounds as well as those from other religious traditions. It is school policy to set aside 25 percent of admissions for those from faiths other than Catholic.

Marist School is committed to creating a climate of respect for all peoples who strive in conscience to seek a relationship with God. As children of the one, same God we are brothers and sisters who are called to live in love and harmony. We are to seek ways to overcome our differences while recognizing the value of our individual religious beliefs.

Catechism of the Catholic Church:

813

The Church is one because of her source: "the highest exemplar and source of this mystery is the unity, in the Trinity of Persons, of one God, the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit."²⁵⁹ *The Church is one because of her founder:* for "the Word made flesh, the prince of peace, reconciled all men to God by the cross, . . . restoring the unity of all in one people and one body." *The Church is one because of her "soul":* "It is the Holy Spirit, dwelling in those who believe and pervading and ruling over the entire Church, who brings about that wonderful communion of the faithful and joins them together so intimately in Christ that he is the principle of the Church's unity." Unity is of the essence of the Church:

What an astonishing mystery! There is one Father of the universe, one Logos of the universe, and also one Holy Spirit, everywhere one and the same; there is also one virgin become mother, and I should like to call her "Church."

817

In fact, "in this one and only Church of God from its very beginnings there arose certain rifts, which the Apostle strongly censures as damnable. But in subsequent centuries much more serious dissensions appeared and large communities became separated from full communion with the Catholic Church—for which, often enough, men of both sides were to blame." The ruptures that wound the unity of Christ's Body—here we must distinguish heresy, apostasy, and schism—do not occur without human sin:

Where there are sins, there are also divisions, schisms, heresies, and disputes. Where there is virtue, however, there also are harmony and unity, from which arise the one heart and one soul of all believers.

818

"However, one cannot charge with the sin of the separation those who at present are born into these communities [that resulted from such separation] and in them are brought up in the faith of Christ, and the Catholic Church accepts them with respect and affection as brothers All who have been justified by faith in Baptism are incorporated into Christ; they therefore have a right to be called Christians, and with good reason are accepted as brothers in the Lord by the children of the Catholic Church."

819

"Furthermore, many elements of sanctification and of truth" are found outside the visible confines of the Catholic Church: "the written Word of God; the life of grace; faith, hope, and charity, with the other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit, as well as visible elements." Christ's Spirit uses these Churches and ecclesial communities as means of salvation, whose power derives from the fullness of grace and truth that Christ has entrusted to the Catholic Church. All these blessings come from Christ and lead to him, and are in themselves calls to "Catholic unity."

838

"The Church knows that she is joined in many ways to the baptized who are honored by the name of Christian, but do not profess the Catholic faith in its entirety or have not preserved unity or communion under the successor of Peter." Those "who believe in Christ and have been properly baptized are put in a certain, although imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church." *With the Orthodox Churches*, this communion is so profound "that it lacks little to attain the fullness that would permit a common celebration of the Lord's Eucharist."

839

"Those who have not yet received the Gospel are related to the People of God in various ways."

The relationship of the Church with the Jewish People. When she delves into her own mystery, the Church, the People of God in the New Covenant, discovers her link with the Jewish People, "the first to hear the Word of God." The Jewish faith, unlike other non-Christian religions, is already a response to God's revelation in the Old Covenant. To the Jews "belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ"; "for the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable."

840

And when one considers the future, God's People of the Old Covenant and the new People of God tend towards similar goals: expectation of the coming (or the return) of the Messiah. But one awaits the return of the Messiah who died and rose from the dead and is recognized as Lord and Son of God; the other awaits the coming of a Messiah, whose features remain hidden till the end of time; and the latter waiting is accompanied by the drama of not knowing or of misunderstanding Christ Jesus.

841

The Church's relationship with the Muslims. "The plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place amongst whom are the Muslims; these profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful God, mankind's judge on the last day."

842

The Church's bond with non-Christian religions is in the first place the common origin and end of the human race:

All nations form but one community. This is so because all stem from the one stock which God created to people the entire earth, and also because all share a common destiny, namely God. His providence, evident goodness, and saving designs extend to all against the day when the elect are gathered together in the holy city. . . .

843

The Catholic Church recognizes in other religions that search, among shadows and images, for the God who is unknown yet near since he gives life and breath and all things and wants all men to be saved. Thus, the Church considers all goodness and truth found in these religions as "a preparation for the Gospel and given by him who enlightens all men that they may at length have life."

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops:

Excerpt is from the article **Making Ecumenism Every Catholic's Concern** by Jeffrey Gros, *The Living Light*, Summer, 1998 Vol. 34, No. 4. Subscribe to *The Living Light*.

Three decades of dialogue among the churches have moved us beyond mere theoretical understanding of one another as fellow Christians, coming into contact with other churches and sharing in prayer, common witness, and service together. We have articulated levels of sacramental and doctrinal agreement unimaginable at the time of the Second Vatican Council. We are moving toward decision on some of the important relationships with churches of the Reformation.

Over the thirty years after Catholic entry into the ecumenical movement, we have a long series of admonitions and directives that make it clear that ecumenism is everyone's concern. Not long ago Pope John Paul II reminded us, "To believe in Christ means to desire unity; to desire unity means to desire the church; to desire the church means to desire the communion of grace which corresponds to the Father's plan from all eternity. Such is the meaning of Christ's prayer: *"ut unum sint"* (May they be one).

Pope John Paul II indicates the universal character of the ecumenical vocation. Certainly formation leadership is called to mirror this collaborative vision:

The quest for Christian unity is not a matter of choice or expediency, but a duty which springs from the very nature of the Christian community. Concern for restoring unity pertains to the whole Church, faithful and clergy alike. It extends to everyone, according to the ability of each, whether it be exercised in daily Christian living or in theological and historical studies. . . . It is absolutely clear that ecumenism, the movement promoting Christian Unity, is not just some sort of "appendix" which is added to the Church's traditional activity. Rather, ecumenism is an organic part of her life and work, and consequently must pervade all that she is and does; it must be like the fruit borne by a healthy and flourishing tree which grows to its full stature. (UUS, no. 19)

Ability

Marist is a school with rigorous academic standards. Those who hope to be admitted to the school and to succeed must have a demonstrated record of academic excellence, the discipline to apply themselves to class requirements, and the personal, internal discipline to comply with the rules of the Student Handbook.

Students must understand that, whatever their academic, athletic, or artistic abilities are, they are all gifts from God to be exercised for their own development and for the good of society. Their talents and abilities do not make them superior to someone else. Exclusion of or ridicule for others thought to be less talented is contrary to the very core of the mission of Marist School.

Teachers and staff should see potential for growth and development in all students and must never favor high achievers over students who struggle for success.

Scripture

Saint Paul

Thus, in virtue of the favor given to me, I warn each of you not to think more highly of himself than he ought. Let him estimate himself soberly, in keeping with the measure of faith that God has apportioned him.

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and not all members have the same function, so too we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually members of one another.

We have gifts that differ according to the favor bestowed on each of us.

(Romans 12, 3-7)

There are different gifts but the same Spirit; there are different ministries but the same Lord; there are different works but the same God who accomplishes all of them in everyone. To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

...But it is the one and the same Spirit who produces all these gifts, distributing them to each as he wills.

(1 Corinthians 4-7 & 11)

Needs some USCC or other Church reference(s)

Socioeconomic Status

From the earliest days of the Church, those who professed Christianity were the “have-nots.” It was used as a sign of the coming of the Messiah that “the poor have the Gospel preached to them.”

Marist Fathers founder Jean-Claude Colin called his priests and those who would follow Marist values to have a special concern for what he called the “least favored.” By those words Fr. Colin meant those people whom society pays the least attention to, those who are always the last to get their basic human needs met.

Scripture, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and social documents from the Vatican and from national conferences of bishops call us to share our blessings with those who have less than we do.

Marist School seeks to provide a school community that is socio-economically diverse. We strive to keep tuition as low as we can and still provide a quality education. We provide no scholarships but, instead, make financial aid available for qualified students on a needs basis. We include in our curriculum a service requirement that is aimed at assisting the “materially poor.”

New Testament:

James 2, 1 - 4

My brothers, your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not allow for favoritism. Suppose there should come into your assembly as man fashionably dressed, with gold rings on his fingers, and at the same time a poor man in shabby clothes.

Suppose further that you were to take notice of the well-dressed man and say, “Sit right here, please,” whereas you say to the poor man. “You can stand!” or “Sit over there by my footrest.”

Have you not in a case like this discriminated in your hearts?

Catechism of the Catholic Church:

1938

There exist also *sinful inequalities* that affect millions of men and women. These are in open contradiction of the Gospel:

Their equal dignity as persons demands that we strive for fairer and more humane conditions. Excessive economic and social disparity between individuals and peoples of the one human race is a source of scandal and militates against social justice, equity, human dignity, as well as social and international peace.⁴⁴

1940

Solidarity is manifested in the first place by the distribution of goods and remuneration for work. It also presupposes the effort for a more just social order where tensions are better able to be reduced and conflicts more readily settled by negotiation.

1941

Socio-economic problems can be resolved only with the help of all the forms of solidarity: solidarity of the poor among themselves, between rich and poor, of workers among themselves, between employers and employees in a business, solidarity among nations and peoples. International solidarity is a requirement of the moral order; world peace depends in part upon this.

Race

Christianity, rooted as it is in the monotheism of the Hebrew Scriptures, teaches us that there is but *one God of all* and, therefore, that we are all brothers and sisters. Racism (i.e. judging the dignity, worthiness, and value of others) then, is incompatible with Christianity and with all faiths that are rooted in Judaism.

Institutional racism, namely social, legal, and economic barriers that reinforce racism, are sinful and must be opposed by all people of faith and by those who call themselves Christian and Catholic.

Racism has a particularly long, painful, and lingering history in the United States. Its most obvious, but certainly not exclusive, hurt has been addressed toward African Americans.

There are other groups who are victims of racism. Anti-semitism still lingers in our society. Today's "war on terrorism" exposes Americans of Arab or Muslim backgrounds to hatred and violence based simply on their race or religion.

Church leaders, from the Vatican, national conferences of bishops, and local bishops, in their statements and documents call us to rid our society of the "sin" of racism.

As one of the first private school in Atlanta to integrate in the 1960s, Marist School seeks to attract and provide a welcoming environment for students and families from all racial backgrounds. Scripture, Church teachings, and the spirit of inclusion from Marist Fathers founder, Jean-Claude Colin demand no less.

A Pastoral Letter from an Archbishop to his people:

In God's Image Pastoral Letter on Racism, Archbishop Harry Flynn of Minneapolis & St. Paul, 2003, #5 & 6

I believe that two broad types of racism need to be recognized and resisted: individual and institutional. Individual racism is evident when a person adopts attitudes or takes actions that are based on the assumption of racial superiority. Such attitudes and actions violate the rights and dignity of other people because of race.

A second type of racism is institutional or structural. This type of racism exists where patterns of racial superiority are embedded in the systems and institutions of society. Such racism is less blatant and more complex, but it exists nonetheless. It is present wherever systems and institutions are created and maintained in such a way that they provide privilege or prejudice for one race over others. This type of racism can be seen, to varying degrees, in many of our social, economic, and political structures, including the structures of our Church.

A Document from the U.S. Catholic Conference:

“Brothers and Sisters to Us” *U.S. Catholic Bishops Pastoral Letter on Racism, 1979*

Racism is an evil which endures in our society and in our Church. Despite apparent advances and even significant changes in the last two decades, the reality of racism remains. In large part it is only external appearances which have changed.

In 1958 we spoke out against the blatant forms of racism that divided people through discriminatory laws and enforced segregation. We pointed out the moral evil that denied human persons their dignity as children of God and their God-given rights. A decade later in a second pastoral letter we again underscored the continuing scandal of racism called for decisive action to eradicate it from our society.

We recognize and applaud the readiness of many Americans to make new strides forward in reducing and eliminating prejudice against minorities. We are convinced that the majority of Americans realize that racial discrimination is both unjust and unworthy of this nation.

We do not deny that changes have been made, that laws have been passed, that policies have been implemented. We do not deny that the ugly external features of racism which marred our society have in part been eliminated. But neither can it be denied that too often what has happened has only a covering over, not a fundamental change. Today the sense of urgency has yielded to an apparent acceptance of the status quo. The climate of crisis engendered by demonstrations, protest, and confrontation has given way to a mood of indifference; and other issues occupy our attention.

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. Racism is the sin that says some human beings are inherently superior and others essentially inferior because of races. It is the sin that makes racial characteristics the determining factor for the exercise of human rights. It mocks the words of Jesus: "Treat others the way you would have them treat you." Indeed, racism is more than a disregard for the words of Jesus; it is a denial of the truth of the dignity of each human being revealed by the mystery of the Incarnation.

When we give in to our fears of the other because he or she is of a race different from ourselves, when we prejudice the motives of others precisely because they are of a different color, when we stereotype or ridicule the other because of racial characteristics and heritage, we fail to heed the command of the Prophet Amos: "Seek good and not evil, that you may live; then truly will the Lord... be with you as you claim!... Then let justice surge like water, and goodness like an unfailing stream."

The structures of our society are subtly racist, for these structures reflect the values which society upholds. They are geared to the success of the majority and the failure of the minority. Members of both groups give unwitting approval by accepting things as they are. Perhaps no single individual is to blame. The sinfulness is often anonymous but nonetheless real. The sin is social in nature in that each of us, in varying degrees, is responsible. All of us in some measure are accomplices. As our recent pastoral letter on moral values states: "The absence of personal fault for an evil does not absolve one of all responsibility. We must seek to resist and undo injustices we have not ceased, lest we become bystanders who tacitly endorse evil and so share in guilt in it."

Finally, racism is sometimes apparent in the growing sentiment that too much is being given to racial minorities by way of affirmative action programs or allocations to redress long-standing imbalances in minority

representation and government-funded programs for the disadvantaged. At times, protestations claiming that all persons should be treated equally reflect the desire to maintain a *status quo* that favors one race and social group at the expense of the poor and the nonwhite.

Racism obscures the evils of the past and denies the burdens that history has placed upon the shoulders of our black, Hispanic, Native American, and Asian brothers and sisters. An honest look at the past makes plain the need for restitution wherever possible - makes evident the justice of restoration and redistribution.

This is the mystery of our Church, that all men and women are brothers and sisters, all one in Christ, all bear the image of the Eternal God. The Church is truly universal, embracing all races, for it is "the visible sacrament of this saving unity. The Church, moreover, follows the example of its founder and, "through its children, is one with [people] of every condition, but especially with the poor and the afflicted."

How great, therefore, is that sin of racism which weakens the Church's witness as the universal sign of unity among all peoples! How great the scandal given by racist Catholics who make the Body of Christ, the Church, a sign of racial oppression! Yet all too often the Church in our country has been for many a "white Church," a racist institution.

Each of us as Catholics must acknowledge a share in the mistakes and sins of the past. Many of us have been prisoners of fear and prejudice. We have preached the Gospel while closing our eyes to the racism it condemns. We have allowed conformity to social pressures to replace compliance with social justice.

Yet more is needed. The prophetic voice of the Church, which is to be heard in every generation and even to the ends of the earth, must not be muted -- especially not by the counter witness of some of its own people. Let the Church speak out, not only in the assemblies of the bishops, but in every diocese and parish in the land, in every chapel and religious house, in every school, in every social service agency, and in every institution that bears the name Catholic. As Pope John Paul II has proclaimed, the Church must be aware of the threats to humanity and of all that opposes the endeavor to make life itself more human. The Church must strive to make every element of human life correspond to the true dignity of the human person.

Therefore, let the Church proclaim to all that the sin of racism defiles the image of God and degrades the sacred dignity of humankind which has been revealed by the mystery of the Incarnation. Let all know that it is a terrible sin that mocks the cross of Christ and ridicules the Incarnation. For the brother and sister of our Brother Jesus Christ are brother and sister to us.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church:

1931

Respect for the human person proceeds by way of respect for the principle that "everyone should look upon his neighbor (without any exception) as 'another self,' above all bearing in mind his life and the means necessary for living it with dignity." No legislation could by itself do away with the fears, prejudices, and attitudes of pride and selfishness which obstruct the establishment of truly fraternal societies. Such behavior will cease only through the charity that finds in every man a "neighbor," a brother.

1934

Created in the image of the one God and equally endowed with rational souls, all men have the same nature and the same origin. Redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ, all are called to participate in the same divine beatitude: all therefore enjoy an equal dignity.

Vatican Documents:

The Church and Racism,

Pontifical Commission on Justice and Peace, 1988, #17 & #19:

John Paul II in turn reaffirmed: "Man's creation by God 'in his own image' confers upon every human person an eminent dignity; it also postulates the fundamental equality of all human beings. For the Church, this equality, which is rooted in man's being, acquires the dimension of an altogether special brotherhood through the Incarnation of the Son of God.... In the Redemption effected by Jesus Christ the Church sees a further basis of the rights and duties of the human person. Hence every form of discrimination based on race...is absolutely unacceptable."

Faith in the one God, Creator and Redeemer of all humankind made in his image and likeness, constitutes the absolute and inescapable negation of any racist ideologies. It is still necessary to draw out all the consequences of this: "We cannot truly pray to God the Father of all if we treat any people in other than brotherly fashion, for all men are created in God's image."

Ethnicity & Culture

Ethnicity, closely associated with culture, refers to membership in a group that is usually viewed as a minority within a society. That ethnic group is defined, then, by its language, customs, or social history and views.

Christianity began in the Jewish culture in what we now call Israel and those lands occupied by Palestinians. Within a generation, Christianity embraced, first the Greek world and then the Roman world. As Christianity moved through the ancient world, it encountered, absorbed, and became part of the diverse cultures and ethnic groups who accepted the Faith. The several Churches that we call the Catholic Church include Byzantine, Coptic, Malabar, Maronite, and other Churches which celebrate Eucharist in their own language and are the heirs to a rich and diverse ethnic and cultural heritage.

Today the Catholic Church calls us all to respect and value those Churches and the cultural and ethnic riches that they bring. The Church calls us to value the good in every race, culture, and ethnic group and see in them the genius and gifts with which God has blessed His many sons and daughters.

Marist School calls its community to do no less. Marist School is to be a community welcomes all and invites all people of good will to live, learn, grow, and pray.

Culture is defined as the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group.

In the United States we now live in a society that grows more culturally diverse every day.

Marist School calls its community to see, appreciate, respect, and celebrate the richness that new immigrants bring to our society. We welcome all peoples of good will to be a part of our school community and expect students, staff, and parents to provide an atmosphere of inclusion and welcome.

The U.S. Catholic Conference

Welcoming the Stranger Among Us

Pastoral Letter, November 15, 2000.

Twenty years ago in *Beyond the Melting Pot: Cultural Pluralism in the United States*, we the bishops of the United States noted that cultural pluralism was the common heritage of all Americans. As the new millennium unfolds, the "new immigration" from all the continents of the world calls attention to the reality of the United

States as largely a "nation of immigrants" and to the diversity of national and ethnic origins of all people of this country. In this new context, the Catholic community is rapidly re-encountering itself as an "immigrant Church," a witness at once to the diversity of people who make up our world and to our unity in one humanity, destined to enjoy the fullness of God's blessings in Jesus Christ. This unity in diversity was celebrated at Encuentro 2000, sponsored as the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' principal jubilee celebration, highlighting "many faces in God's house."

A century ago, the Church responded generously to the needs of immigrants: building parishes and schools, establishing a vast array of charitable institutions, evangelizing newcomers, and being evangelized in turn by immigrant Catholics with distinctive traditions of worship and often a deep spirituality of their own. Members of the Eastern Catholic Churches arrived during the same period. They were not always understood by their fellow Catholics, although they were received and did develop as members of the Church in America. Despite the attacks of "nativists" and the criticisms made by English-speaking Catholics, national parishes were established that provided a safe haven where newcomers were able to pray and hear the word of God in their own languages, begin the education of their children in the language of the home, and so adapt to their new society with the security of community and faith. The Church embraced these immigrants, supporting them in their striving to build a better life and encouraging the efforts of many of them to help build a labor movement that could represent them in that struggle. And then, as now—despite the predictions of critics—immigrants and their children quickly became vital participants in American society, acquiring proficiency in English by the second and third generations, rising in the educational system, and contributing in thousands of ways to the economic growth and social, political, and spiritual life of the country.

Forgetful of Our Heritage

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to welcoming the stranger is that many Americans have forgotten their immigrant past. "Nativism" assumes that there is just one image of a "real American" and that immigrants either cannot live up to it or willfully refuse to do so. Originally directed against Catholics of all sorts, today such nativism can be seen in a campaign against "multiculturalism" in all its forms, on the premise that reverence for distinctive traditions and histories undermines the unity of American society. Like the Catholic "Americanizers" of the nineteenth century, who opposed the establishment of national parishes, the critics of multiculturalism today want immigrants and other distinctive groups to shed their languages, customs, and identities as quickly as possible, to become Americans "just like the rest of us." But "the rest of us" are, in fact, a culturally plural society—Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and Muslims; believers and non-believers; Southerners and Northerners; Irish, Italian, and Mexican—proud of our heritages and proud to be Americans, all at once.

A kind of nativism appears in the Church itself when established members insist that there is just one way to worship, one set of familiar hymns, one small handful of familiar devotions, one way to organize a parish community, one language for all—and that immigrants must adapt to that way of doing things. In doing so, such nativists forget not only that their ancestors spoke different languages and worshiped in different ways not long ago, but that their devotions and familiar saints, even their patterns of church organization, sprang from encounters between differing traditions within the Church.

Competition for Resources

Competition for resources and recognition among the ethnic groups of the parish often centers on specifics such as Mass times, the use of facilities, and the attention of priests; but such conflicts can reflect vague fears that one group will somehow displace a long-established one. Established parishioners, used to thinking of their parish practices and religious traditions as the norm, may cling to their control over the parish council or "prime" Sunday Mass times. They may find themselves increasingly a minority and may react with fear to protect the parish where they were raised and where they saw their children baptized and educated in the faith. African American Catholics, who have their own history of having been excluded and discriminated against in the larger Church, as in society in general, now face newcomers in many of their parishes, newcomers who threaten their hold on the few institutions where they have come to feel at home. In some cases, multiple

immigrant groups compete with one another within a single parish. In other cases, immigrant clergy struggle with their bishop or pastor for control over the finances of an immigrant group or for final authority over the congregation. While such competition can be destructive of community life, the issues involved are often real, and they require wisdom, much charity, and careful mediation to reach solutions that respect the legitimate concerns of all sides.

Cultural Fears

The fears associated with encounters between groups are often difficult to overcome precisely because they are unacknowledged or unclear. Some are afraid because they do not know how to behave with others of a different culture. Others—in ignorance, relying on stereotypes—are convinced that those who are different are also somehow inferior: less educated, "dirty," or dangerous. Negative images and derogatory jokes and remarks readily merge with racism, America's "original sin," reinforcing the fear of the unknown in many people's minds by creating stereotypes about people whose facial features or skin color identify them as Asian, Arab, African, or Mexican. In some instances, racism has been so deeply ingrained that an institutional racism prevails. Racist attitudes can linger in subtle ways, even when people get to know one another in parish activities, unless we vigorously educate ourselves about our neighbors, learn to appreciate their heritages, encounter their own images of us, and strive to work with them on behalf of common causes.

Some of our fears are tied to what we see as defense of our own culture or way of life. Many people cling—rightfully so—to their distinctive culture. They fear the loss of their own familiar ways of doing things as they encounter new images and practices of community life and worship that are foreign to them. Immigrants themselves often fear other groups and worry that their children will lose the values of the homeland, come to show disrespect towards their parents and elders, and exchange their own culture for the consumer values of the surrounding society. Such concerns are well founded, and they compound the difficulties of adaptation to a new setting as both host and immigrant react, each against the other, in fear of change.

Coming to Understand Others as the First Form of Hospitality

Time and time again, Pope John Paul II has echoed the teachings of his predecessors and of the Second Vatican Council that "it is one of the properties of the human person that he can achieve true and full humanity only by means of culture" (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 53) and that to take away a person's culture is therefore to damage human dignity grievously. Communion does not abolish differences but brings together one family, diverse and united in the one Lord. Pope Paul VI urged that "it must be avoided that these diversities and adaptations in accordance with the various ethnical groups, even though legitimate, result in harm to that unity to which all are called in the Church" (*Pastoralis Migratorum Cura*). Thus, the Church's norms for the pastoral care of immigrants attempt to balance the legitimate rights of immigrants with their duty to look to the common good of both their communities of origin and their host community (*Instruction on the Pastoral Care of People Who Migrate*, nos. 5-11).

The Church embraces the rich cultural pluralism of this immigrant nation—what some call its "multicultural" reality. Pope John Paul II insists that "the immigrant members of the Church, while freely exercising their rights and duties and being in full ecclesial communion in the particular churches, feeling themselves Christians and brothers towards all, must be able to remain completely themselves as far as language, culture, liturgy and spirituality, and particular traditions are concerned" (Address for World Migrants' Day, July 16, 1985). Indeed, the pope warns repeatedly against attempting to rush a process of assimilation or cultural adaptation in the name of unity, because the goal is the mutual enrichment of peoples, not their assimilation to one way of being human. Thus the pope reached out to refugees in the camp at Phanat Nikon, Thailand, in November 1984, saying, "My heart is with you. Have faith in yourselves. Don't forget your identity as a free people with your own legitimate place in this world. Don't lose your distinctive personality as a people! Remain firmly rooted in your respective cultures. The world needs to learn more from you and to join in appreciation of your uniqueness."

The pope teaches that immigrants must guard their cultures for the enrichment of the world. But the cultures of immigrants will only be able to enrich this country when all Americans—recent immigrants and those long settled in this country—open their hearts and minds to their neighbors and come to appreciate the diverse cultures that make up this society. Knowledge of cultures cannot just come from books, but must come from the concrete efforts of individuals to get to know their neighbors, in all their diversity.

The Elements of Marist Education

#10

Maintaining a spirit of openness to all, avoiding exclusivity, exhibiting a welcoming acceptance and inclusion, and seeking mutual cooperation.

Sexual Orientation

Catholic Church authorities make a distinction between sexual orientation and sexual activity. Homosexual orientation (an “exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex”) is morally neutral. Sexual acts are not. The Church teaches that all with a homosexual orientation must abstain from sexual activity just as it teaches that all non-married heterosexuals must abstain from all but marital sex. The Church calls all Catholics, indeed all people, to "accept with respect, compassion, and sensitivity" all homosexual individuals.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (2nd Edition):

Homosexuality and Chastity-

2357

Homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. It has taken a great variety of forms through the centuries and in different cultures. Its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained. Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered." They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved.

2358

The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. These persons are called to fulfill God's will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition.

2359

Homosexual persons are called to chastity. By the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom, at times by the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops:

A Statement of the Bishops' Committee on Marriage and Family

Always Our Children: A Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children and Suggestions for Pastoral Ministers

Respect for the God-given dignity of all persons means the recognition of human rights and responsibilities. The teachings of the Church make it clear that the fundamental human rights of homosexual persons must be defended and that all of us must strive to eliminate any forms of injustice, oppression, or violence against them (cf. *The Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*, 1986, no. 10).

It is not sufficient only to avoid unjust discrimination. Homosexual persons "must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2358). They, as is true of every human being, need to be nourished at many different levels simultaneously. This includes friendship, which is a way of loving and is essential to healthy human development. It is one of the richest possible human experiences. Friendship can and does thrive outside of genital sexual involvement.

The Christian community should offer its homosexual sisters and brothers understanding and pastoral care. More than twenty years ago we bishops stated that "Homosexuals . . . should have an active role in the Christian community" (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *To Live in Christ Jesus: A Pastoral Reflection on the Moral Life*, 1976, p. 19). What does this mean in practice? It means that all homosexual persons have a right to be welcomed into the community, to hear the word of God, and to receive pastoral care. Homosexual persons living chaste lives should have opportunities to lead and serve the community. However, the Church has the right to deny public roles of service and leadership to persons, whether homosexual or heterosexual, whose public behavior openly violates its teachings.

The Church also recognizes the importance and urgency of ministering to persons with HIV/AIDS. Though HIV/AIDS is an epidemic affecting the whole human race, not just homosexual persons, it has had a devastating effect upon them and has brought great sorrow to many parents, families, and friends.

Without condoning self-destructive behavior or denying personal responsibility, we reject the idea that HIV/AIDS is a direct punishment from God. Furthermore, persons with AIDS are not distant, unfamiliar people, the objects of our mingled pity and aversion. We must keep them present to our consciousness as individuals and a community, and embrace them with unconditional love. . . . Compassion—love—toward persons infected with HIV is the only authentic Gospel response. (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Called to Compassion and Responsibility: A Response to the HIV/AIDS Crisis*, 1989)

Nothing in the Bible or in Catholic teaching can be used to justify prejudicial or discriminatory attitudes and behaviors. We reiterate here what we said in an earlier statement:

We call on all Christians and citizens of good will to confront their own fears about homosexuality and to curb the humor and discrimination that offend homosexual persons. We understand that having a homosexual orientation brings with it enough anxiety, pain and issues related to self-acceptance without society bringing additional prejudicial treatment. (*Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning*, 1991, p. 55).