It is striking to me that in my entire priesthood I have never had anyone confess the sin of racism; not even at a communal penance service when racism is mentioned in the examination of conscience. As we move through this Lenten season of conversion, I invite you to use the following “racial examination of conscience” written by Mark Schmidt, the director of the Respect Life/Social Justice Office of the Archdiocese of Dubuque.

1. Do I interact with people who are different from me outside of work or school?
2. Do I read books or stories written by people of different ethnic or religious heritage than myself?
3. Have I taken the time to listen to the voices of others who don’t look like me or have a different background and life experience than me?
4. If in a supervisor role, have I included people of various cultural or ethnic backgrounds when developing professional guidelines and/or dress codes?
5. Have I ever said the following phrases or something similar: “she’s pretty for a black girl,” “he’d be handsome if he wasn’t so dark,” “that little girl would be cute if her mom did her hair,” or made other judgments on beauty and acceptance.
6. Have I ever asked someone about their heritage or ethnicity by asking “so, what are you?”
7. Have I ever seen someone on the street and made a judgement based on how they dress, how their hair is styled, how they walk, how they speak?
8. Have I ever participated in or laughed at jokes or comments that belittle or denigrate people who don’t look like me or practice a different faith than me?
9. Do I blame the victims who suffer poverty and/or oppression for their plight?
10. Do I try to come up with excuses for things I do or say that are perceived as racist or harmful by others?
11. Do I dismiss the concerns or observations of others as simply being “overly sensitive” or being “PC”?
12. Do I ask someone that I am an acquaintance with in social or professional settings to speak for their entire culture? Do I use a friend or family member who is of a different background than my own to “prove” that I have said or done nothing wrong?
13. Have I ever said “I’m not racist, but…” Do I always speak to others from different backgrounds with respectful tone and language?
14. Do I automatically associate negative attributes to an entire group of people?
15. Do I use dehumanizing language about others, referring to them as “thugs, animals, illegals,” etc.
16. Do I categorize other ethnicities into groups like “good” and “troublesome”?
17. When trying to show a broad ethnic representation for my community or institution do I randomly place minorities in advertisements?
18. Do I ask for input on how advertisements may be perceived outside of my own culture?
19. Do I take the time to learn and listen to the stories of others’ lives in order to better understand them and the challenges they may face that I do not? Do I see Jesus Christ in each and every person I encounter every single time?
20. Do I love each and every person regardless of their heritage, the choices they have made, their status in society or the perception I may have of them?

Continue to use our 2024 Lenten Calendar Transformation Begins at a Table which helps us to deepen our 2023 General Assembly on foodprint/food justice.

An astounding 40% of food purchased in the United States is thrown away. This discarded food is also a major contributor to global warming. Food that is packed tightly in landfills emits methane when it decomposes; a gas more dangerous than carbon dioxide. The answer is composting of our food waste. Backyard composting is a wonderful experience—if you have a back yard! Many municipalities offer residents opportunities to participate in commercial composting—which also allows more things to be composted. Dominican Sister Dusty Farnam, OP lives in NYC and brings her compostables in a bag on the subway to a composting center. Watch this excellent video of the why’s and how’s of composting from Mariandale Retreat Center in Ossining, NY Earth to Earth-Mission training on composting (vimeo.com). Hopefully it will excite you to go to this site to find composting opportunities in your area https://www.litterless.com/wheretocompost

Sisters Maryanne Tracey, Elena Colicelli, and Marie Russo attend the opening of the exhibit Ties that Bind at St. Elizabeth University that traces the history of African Americans in Morris County, NJ. Among the stories featured was that of Mother Frances Freeman Ray to form the Bethel Mite Society, which was later incorporated as the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church of Morristown in 1843. Bethel served as the only school for Colored and Native American children in Morris County. Imagine the courage and ingenuity of Mother Frances, founding a church and school when African Americans were still enslaved.

To deepen your understanding of the ongoing tragedy in Gaza, watch the moving webinar On the Scales of the Spirit: Responding to Settler Regimes from the Daniel Berrigan Collective https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4gL9Rzsqhck

The No to state uttered by the unarmed Christ is vindicated in His resurrection. Of this, the world can never be a witness… This is our glory. From Peter and Paul to Martin Luther King, Jr. and Romero. Christians have known something which the “nations” as such can never know or teach—how to live and how to die. We are witnesses to the resurrection. We practice resurrection. We risk resurrection. —Daniel Berrigan (Testimony: The Word Made Fresh)

The Office of Peace, Justice, and Ecological Integrity wishes you a prayerful Holy Week, a joyous celebration of Easter, and a life of risking resurrection.