**Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth**

**From the Office of Peace, Justice, and Ecological Integrity**

**Reflection for Election 2020**

From *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love - A Pastoral Letter Against Racism*, The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops:

Love compels each of us to resist racism courageously. It requires us to reach out generously to the victims of this evil, to assist the conversion needed in those who still harbor racism, and to begin to change policies and structures that allow racism to persist. Overcoming racism is a demand of justice, but because Christian love transcends justice, the end of racism will mean that our community will bear fruit beyond simply the fair treatment of all…Therefore we, the Catholic bishops in the United States, acknowledge the many times when the Church has failed to live as Christ taught—to love our brothers and sisters. Acts of racism have been committed by leaders and members of the Catholic Church—by bishops, clergy, religious, and laity—and her institutions. We express deep sorrow and regret for them. We also acknowledge those instances when we have not done enough or stood by silently when grave acts of injustice were committed. We ask for forgiveness from all who have been harmed by these sins committed in the past or in the present.

**Reflection:** Racial justice and white privilege will be issues in the 2020 election season in a way that they haven’t been since the civil rights struggles of the Sixties. Americans are becoming aware of how pervasive racism is in our civil institutions – it affects how we draw up voting districts, how we fund the police department, what statues we put up in our public squares, how we allocate tax dollars. As the USCCB pastoral letter acknowledges, our church and its institutions have often colluded in racism rather than offer a gospel vision of the Beloved Community.

1. Reflect on your experience of racism/white privilege in your life as a Sister of Charity. Did you know that when Elizabeth Seton’s maternal grandfather, Richard Charlton, died he left Elizabeth “my negro boy, formerly named Brennus?” Have you had experiences or heard stories of the Congregation acting in a racist way? How do you feel when you hear these stories? Write a prayer of contrition for the ways in which the Sisters of Charity have been racist.

2. Design and commit to a program of anti-racist formation for yourself. Each week,choose an article, a book chapter, a DVD, a podcast. NETWORK offers a very rich list of resources <https://networkadvocates.org/recommittoracialjustice/>

3. Commit with a friend to a weekly conversation: where did you notice racism this week? In yourself? In the world? Where did you succeed/fail in combatting it?

**Deeper Dive**: Read the Spring 2019 issue of A Matter of Spirit *Seeking Racial Justice* <https://www.ipjc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/AMOSSpring_WEB.pdf>. Pay special attention to *White Privilege Diminishes Our Humanity: Ten Commitments for Meaningful Change.*

**Prayer:** In solidarity with George Floyd and all people of color who “can’t breathe” -take a few breaths, inhale, and say slowly, “Come Holy Spirit.” As you exhale, say slowly “Open wide our hearts.”