

Understanding Race and Racism: Returning to the Light

Spring is upon us, and we find ourselves looking forward to longer days and warmer temperatures with the experience of COVID hopefully in the rear-view mirror. It's interesting that the coming of spring and the season of Lent coincide, which gives us the opportunity to meditate and reexamine our role as Christians in exercising of our faith. We have all experienced the long, dark tunnel of the COVID years. Now it is time to redirect our attention to finding ways to help our society move forward into the light for everyone, not just those in our personal "bubble."

For the past two years, COVID was a strong distraction. We found ourselves dealing with situations never- before encountered in our generation. As a result, compelling issues surfaced, but then were pushed to the side. Race and racism fall into that category. The events surrounding the death of George Floyd gripped our attention for a while but faded into the background of the years-long pandemic. Now it is time to bring the concerns regarding this topic into focus once again and move forward in the struggle for equality in a racist society.

The pandemic cracked open the egg of inequality in our society, especially in health care, education, and social welfare. As Christians, we cannot allow the issues surrounding race and racism to fade into the woodwork once again. It is important that we continue to shine a spotlight on them and ask ourselves if we are unconsciously contributing to racism. Angela Davis, political activist and scholar, stated, "In a racist society, it is not enough to be non-racist. We must be anti-racist."

Having our voices heard can take many forms. Raising awareness of the issues surrounding race and racism is one way to move forward. In the coming months, we hope to raise the awareness of Saint John's community by focusing on specific topics regarding inequality that affect all of us, either consciously or unconsciously. Michelle Obama, former first lady and author, wrote, "Race and racism is a reality that so many of us grow up learning to just deal with. But if we ever hope to move past it, it can't just be on people of color to deal with it. It is up to all of us – Black, white, everyone – no matter how well-meaning we think we might be, to do the honest, uncomfortable work of rooting it out."

If you have any questions or want to share your thoughts with us, please contact Connie DeSimone, connied21@comcast.net, or Claudette Chmura, cdmchmura@aol.com.