

Understanding Race and Racism: Promises of Baptism

We have recently celebrated Easter. Along with the joyful noises surrounding this annual event, we were called upon to renew our Baptismal covenant, the promises we made at the time we were “washed clean” and entered the Christian family. Most of us were baptized as infants and could not understand what we were called to do, so others spoke for us in sealing our covenant with Christ. Now that we are adults, Easter gives us the opportunity to use our own voices in proclaiming our connection with Christ.

Now is the time to examine how we apply our Baptismal Covenant to our daily lives. Our promises at Baptism are clearly laid out in the Book of Common Prayer: continue in the teachings of the apostles, proclaim by word and example the Good News of Christ, seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself, and strive for justice and peace among all people while respecting the dignity of every human being. All of this can be applied to how we address and try to understand the effects of race and racism that exist in our society.

There are many questions we can ask ourselves during this season of renewal and rebirth. How do I live as a person of faith? How do I apply the promises of our Baptismal covenant when looking at the issues of race and racism? What role do I play in seeking justice for all? Race and racism are not comfortable topics. We may say we are not racist. Yet, we should ask ourselves how can we fulfill the promises of our Baptism, and accept the responsibility of raising our awareness regarding race and racism?

One way we can actively participate is through education. Then we can feel more confident in raising our voices and making ourselves heard. Nelson Mandela, an anti-apartheid leader and the first Black president of South Africa, stated, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” Over the next few months, we will be discussing the challenges we face in understanding race and racism, thus finding ways to apply the promises of our Baptismal covenant. Amanda Gorman, the poet and activist who composed and read a poem for President Biden’s inauguration, stated, “There is always light. If only we are brave enough to see it. If only we are brave enough to be it.”

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