



50 Ideas for Engaging Catholics in the 50th Anniversary Project: Rebuilding the Bridge

1. Sponsor a *Black Jeopardy Game* in the parish/diocese/school.
2. Create a *Playlist* of motivational songs – Then & Now, which can be shared on your group's website or newsletter.
3. Record a *video (or audio) interview* with someone who participated in the movement (obtain permissions) and post online.
4. Organize a *tour* of a local historic site, e.g., museum or place of protest. Include prayer and a spiritual focus.
5. Conduct a *pilgrimage* to several regional sites. Begin or end with an outdoor mass, if feasible.
6. Host an *open mic event* primarily (but not exclusively) for young adults.
7. In the Catholic high schools, *study the Freedom Schools*. Re-enact a lesson, such as the strategies for non-violent resistance or the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. A couple of good resources are USCCB's *Faithful Citizenship* statement and materials; and Dorothy Cotton's book, *If Your Back's Not Bent: The Role of the Citizenship Education Program in the Civil Rights Movement* (Atria Books 2012).
8. Develop a *film and discussion series* to view the mini-series, "Eyes on the Prize" or other relevant documentary(s).
9. Create a *radio theater* experience to listen to and discuss an audiobook such as, "The Warmth of Other Suns," by Isabel Wilkerson (Random House 2011).

10. Sponsor an *oratorical contest* for Catholic grade schools. Go beyond "I Have a Dream."
11. In the parish initiate a *letter writing campaign* about a particular neighborhood concern such as violence, racial profiling, unemployment, funding for quality education, etc.
12. Organize a *Jr./Sr. Mixer* in which young and old can socialize together. Include accessible space and opportunities to talk, sing, dance and play games together.
13. Have a versatile *5K event* to raise awareness that the racial justice movement continues. Structure it so that people can walk, run, skate or ride as they are able.
14. Arrange for a *craft fair* where people can share their skills, display the work of their hands and/or teach others.
15. Start a *hand-dancing or line dancing* program to bring together different generations and create an opportunity for presentations and discussion. The American Hand Dance Association can provide guidance.
16. Plan a *visit to an immigration detention center* to learn about the needs of migrants and refugees. Recognize the similarities and differences in the issues then and now. Use the Pastoral Circle [see-judge-act] to analyze, reflect and plan appropriate action.
17. Sponsor a themed *writing contest (short stories, poetry, essays)*. Create an environment for the awards program that incorporates photographs, news clippings or other memorabilia of the era.
18. Research *the story of your diocese* during the era. Tell the story in words and pictures or through drama.
19. Collect *favorite recipes* and pull together a "family cookbook" that is enhanced by personal recollections, photos, etc. If the book is to be sold, use the money to benefit a parish ministry, charitable organization or educational initiative.

20. Convene a day to work on implementing the [National Black Catholic Congress Pastoral Plan of Action](#) locally.
21. Engage in a *Sweat Equity* project that enhances the neighborhood around the parish or school. Before the work, listen to [Catholic Social Teaching \(CST\) Principles and Podcasts](#) or distribute [CST theme cards](#) and reflect on the project in light of CST. Communicate with the local leadership to determine the needs. Work as a partner with, not for the low-income community.
22. Invite persons of diverse cultural backgrounds to plan and prepare a *retreat day* in your organization or parish that can restart the work of reconciliation and healing. [Best Practices for Shared Parishes: So That They May All Be One](#) (book and power point training aid) can help.
23. Begin a "*meet your neighbor in the other pew*" effort in the parish that encourages conversation before or after Mass. Stretch yourself to talk with someone different.
24. Ask and support the *young adults* in your parish to plan an appropriate event or activity that speaks to them, such as connecting with the #blacklivesmatter initiative.
25. During the Sunday Liturgy include significant *music from the era*, e.g., If I Can Help Somebody, We Shall Overcome, selected Spirituals, etc.
26. In African American (and diverse) parishes sponsor coffee and donut conversations after mass to *discuss real life reflections* on personal experience during the civil rights era. Allow a safe place for individuals to disclose their involvement, detachment or restraint.
27. In dioceses where there is a sizable African American Catholic presence, host discussions after mass about interracial councils, home visits or other desegregation "*experiments*" during the era.

28. Plan a program with a *Civil Rights Era focus*, for special celebrations such as, Martin Luther King's Birthday, Black History Month, Black Catholic History Month, Kwanzaa or the parish Feast Day. Create a slide show of related photographs.
29. Use *Reconciled Through Christ: On Reconciliation and Greater Collaboration Between Hispanic American Catholics and African American Catholics* ([English](#), [Spanish](#)) as a model for structuring a *multi-cultural diocesan dialog* among cultural groups in the parish/diocese.
30. In the classroom use Operation Crossroads' technique to create a *Timeline of American History* that includes the milestones of Native Americans, Asian and Pacific Islanders, Migrants and Refugees or groups in the parish/neighborhood. Have a facilitated discussion that increases awareness, sensitivity and respect. These resources may help:
 - For Children: *A Different Mirror: for Young People A History of Multicultural America* by Ronald Takaki (Seven Stories Press 2012)
 - For Adults: *A People's History of the United States: 1492 - Present* (Harper Perennial Modern Classics 2003)
 - For Students: [A History of Racial Injustice Timeline](#) from the non-profit organization Equal Justice Initiative
31. End an educational activity with a *Reconciliation Service*.
32. Schedule a *parish retreat day for families* to explore and celebrate diversity. Encourage participation of biracial families and invite them to tell their story of becoming family. Examine the challenges and joys of forming authentic friendship across racial lines.
33. Host a *cultural summer camp for youth* to learn about different Asian, African, Native American, Hispanic and European cultures.
34. *Invite existing Catholic organizations or programs to dedicate* one or more of their regular gatherings to take on this subject. Consider Newman Club, Sodality, Knights of Columbus, Holy Name, St. Vincent de Paul, Ultreya, JustFaith group, Catholic Business Owners, lay

religious orders (third order/associates), Theology on Tap, Priest Council, Diocesan staff, Examine how the struggle for racial harmony involves their organization.

35. Conduct an *in-service or continuing education* program for clergy, Catholic educators, catechists or family life leaders using [*The Response to Dr. King's Letter from Birmingham Jail and Study Guide*](#).
36. Discover whether there are *mascots* of Native Americans in the Catholic Schools in your community. Start or join the movement to replace such mascots with non-offensive alternatives.
37. Learn about the impact of the *Immigration Act of 1965* on U.S. society, particularly how it affected citizenship for persons of Asian ancestry.
38. Study the pathway for *citizenship for Native Americans* in the U.S.
39. Explore the *cultural diversity of your community*. Find out how many languages and countries of origin are represented.
40. Improve Americans' knowledge of *world geography*. Reintroduce geography in the Catholic school curriculum. Host a Geography Bee. Teach the countries and capitals of each continent.
41. In Bible Study groups, take time to *identify geographic regions*. Match ancient names with their modern counterparts. Become familiar with some of the customs, food and dress of those parts of the world.
42. *View the photography* of professionals who captured images of the Civil Rights movement. Find the names of prominent photographers and google their works or search for their books in a library or book store.
43. If you live outside the South, discover if your community had Jim Crow laws or segregation policies. Was racial discrimination practiced or enforced without formal laws?

44. Research “racial micro-aggression” and unconscious bias to understand how this behavior is manifested in interracial or intercultural communication.
45. Have the parish pastoral council or other parish leaders *evaluate how welcoming* the parish is of persons who are different. Determine whether there is a need to address weaknesses in this area. These videos may help initiate the process:
 - [Sr. Thea Bowman’s address to the U.S. Catholic bishops](#)
 - [Secretariat of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs’ series, On The Path Toward Christian Unity](#)
46. Complete a self-assessment of the *FIG Complex*, reflecting on your personal **F**ears, **I**gnorance and **G**uilt when thinking or talking about race or racism.
47. When a sensitive topic that may hinge on racial harmony is on the meeting agenda of your Catholic organization, practice Eric Law’s *Respectful Communication Guidelines*, also referred to as the mutual invitation process.
48. Learn how the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) improved the quality of life for persons with physical, mental and sensory challenges. Trace the history of discrimination against such persons prior to passage of the ADA. Is your parish or organization prepared to accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities? Learn about the lives of individuals like Helen Keller and Ray Charles, who exceeded expectations in life and contributed to society. Visit www.ncpd.org for information and resources.
49. For families that *home-school*/their youngsters, explore the Church’s social doctrine on racial justice. Create a book of prayers and illustrations for racial harmony.
50. Relax to the sound of spiritual/liturgical or folk music from other regions of the world. Enjoy the melody and musical qualities of a different culture, even if you don’t understand the words. Access international music via the public library or a free internet music channel.