

As witnesses representing the European-American family, we bring to this gathering of the People of God our concerns from the past and for the present and future. We strive to be honest, self-critical, yet also hopeful for our better future together.

1. We are a people whose ancestors were builders. They built churches and schools, organizations with strong ties to the Church, universities and hospitals. The things they built offered support to generations of immigrants—from all parts of Europe. Their institutions and organizations formed younger generations in the faith and paved the way for economic prosperity that came at long last. Yet now we are a people struggling with a sense of loss. The robust Catholic counter-culture we once gloried in has vanished. Our unity has weakened as a result differing theological perspectives. We mourn the lack of a strong Catholic identity among many of our young people. Many of our European-American people also—frankly—grieve the loss of a world where they were the dominant and sometimes the only force in parishes and other institutions. We cannot return to an unjust world of cultural dominance, yet many of our people are frustrated by culture clash and confused by unfamiliar cultural expressions of Catholicism. Some blame undocumented immigrants. All have to let go of an Anglo-majority world that is essentially already gone.

2. We came—most of us—from European immigrant roots in the last two centuries. Often clergy arrived with us. Many of our ancestors' struggles were difficult, yet the Church flourished. Over a century or more, most of us have lost our specific ethnic identities for a multitude of reasons (though a few proudly hang on to that heritage). The

Second World War changed the European-American community a lot, as many of our young men travelled for the first time and came home with a new openness to other European cultures that encouraged interrelationships at home. After all that, we have forgotten or tend to romanticize our immigrant ancestors' struggles, sometimes making it difficult for us to relate to present immigrants' concerns.

3. Our journey has been blessed by a history of heroic people who kept the faith and gave us saintly examples, from Mother Cabrini and Elizabeth Ann Seton to Thomas Merton and Dorothy Day. In past times we were blessed by a Catholic counter-culture that developed in reaction to Protestant rejection and united us. Later we were blessed by a gradual acceptance by and integration into the larger society. Our people found economic and educational opportunities. Some feel this acceptance came with the great price of forfeiting our cultural specificity.

4. We have faced obstacles. For our ancestors, Anglo-American Protestant rejection meant persecution and prejudice. Yet at times, our people also became persecutors themselves as they failed to accept those different from us both within our Church and outside it. As our ancestors assimilated into the mainstream in the twentieth century, we must acknowledge that many European-Americans engaged in overt and covert forms of racism that hurt our brothers and sisters and separated us from the gospel of Jesus Christ. In more recent decades, assimilation has meant living in a world less permeated with religious faith, and now we find it difficult in that more secular world to pass the faith onto our children.

5. We would like to seize the opportunity today to evangelize our Euro-American Catholic people—especially our Catholic parents—so that we can strengthen our families and pass along the faith for generations to come. We know that at this particular time many people are searching for spirituality, and we believe that having a personal experience of Catholic faith and faith community counts more than ever. We also want to make amends for the discrimination of the past and the present. In our efforts to welcome other cultures into our parishes and ministries, we know that we carry an “invisible backpack” of privilege which can cause a breakdown in authentic relationships. Within our own community, we want to work toward greater openness that would allow for a stronger sense of unity.

6. Our vision is to build relationships with our Catholic brothers and sisters from other cultures and groups. We can no longer be a "dominant culture" but simply one group among many in a blessed and diverse Communion. This will have consequences. We have to be willing to face our losses, to mourn. We need to ensure that we share power and leadership in our parishes and other institutions so that everyone is included and represented. We cannot face the challenges of the present time without the resources of the whole People of God. We need to be able to join together as equals with all our beloved communities' gifts represented together in mutuality at the table of the Lord. Our vision is to ask God to change our hearts and our institutions to make this happen.