Prepared Remarks: Bishop Daniel E. Garcia
Subcommittee for the Promotion of Racial Justice and Reconciliation
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Plenary Assembly

Brother bishops, the Subcommittee for the Promotion of Racial Justice and Reconciliation proposes designating the last Sunday in October as an annual Day of Prayer for Racial Justice.

Establishing a Day of Prayer for Racial Justice provides the Church with an intentional opportunity to seek God's healing for the wounds caused by the sin of racism. Such a day creates sacred space for reflection, repentance, and the conversion of hearts, fostering deeper reconciliation within the Body of Christ and across our communities.

You may ask, "Why establish this Day now?" There is no shortage of evidence, if we engage in conversation with people of color in our parishes, schools and communities, that the sin of racism continues to undermine the God-given dignity of every human person. Our experience of pastoral accompaniment tells us that many individuals and communities have deep wounds as a result of racism and discrimination. This sin remains embedded in society and, at times, within the life of the Church. As the Body of Christ, the Church has a unique responsibility to insist on the intrinsic dignity of all, especially those who are marginalized and vulnerable. Through prayer, conversion of heart, and concrete action, the Church can help work towards repairing the harm caused by racism, promote reconciliation, and foster healing for those who have been wounded by this grave sin.

Some of you may also have seen the new CARA survey that was released recently. 60% of respondents reported that they believe racism exists within their local communities. Additionally, 26% of Black respondents indicated that they have personally experienced racial discrimination within their parishes or Catholic schools. When participants were asked about their familiarity with the U.S. bishops' pastoral letter against racism, *Open Wide Our Hearts*, only 48% reported being familiar with the document. These findings underscore the continued need for initiatives that promote racial justice, inclusion, and reconciliation within the Church and broader society.

A dedicated Day of Prayer for Racial Justice also enables the Church to intentionally accompany and uplift those who have historically felt unseen or unheard. Through prayer, listening, catechesis, and solidarity, the Church affirms the dignity of every person and demonstrates its commitment to being a community of welcome, compassion, unity, and justice.

After consultation with the Committee on Divine Worship, we have identified the Last Sunday in October, which would coincide with either the 30th or 31st Sunday of Ordinary Time,

as the best time to celebrate this Day of Prayer. The readings are very fitting for this designation. Copies of the readings are included with the background materials.

Placing this observance at the end of October would provide a meaningful transition into November, a month that recognizes both Black Catholic History and Native American Heritage. This timing would allow the designated Sunday to serve as a bridge between related observances, creating opportunities for parishes to engage in prayer, reflection, dialogue, and formation around the Church's call to racial justice and reconciliation.

The proposed annual observance would provide an opportunity to incorporate reflection on racial justice and reconciliation more fully into the liturgical life of the Church. It would encourage broader participation among the faithful, support ongoing formation and dialogue, and strengthen the Church's witness to the dignity of every human person. The Subcommittee strongly endorses this proposal, which has also received the support of the Committee on Divine Worship and the Administrative Committee. My brother bishops, it is my prayer that you all may also support this proposal.