

# All Together Now – A Lesson Plan on Racism

Racism can be a difficult topic to discuss with teens. It is popular to think that we are “color blind”. But the fact is that the playing field is not level and that minorities do not have the same advantages as the majority. This lesson plan on racism introduces the topic of institutional racism.

Before any discussion, lay down some ground rules to allow everyone to speak honestly. This topic can be an emotional one, which is why some people avoid it. On the other hand, nothing will ever change if we sweep our problems under the rug.

If you are not comfortable leading this discussion for this lesson plan on racism, educate yourself first. Here are some [video resources](#) for you. Also check out the book [Waking Up White](#) as background for this topic if you don't really understand what institutional racism is.

## Opening Game for All Together Now Lesson Plan

*Start this lesson plan on racism with the [People Sort Activity](#). Don't rush through this. Take time at the end to debrief about why we view skin color differently than other differences, such as eye color or hair color.*

*Follow up with a couple of questions:*

- When you sorted, were you usually with the same group of people or with different people? Why do you think that was?
- Do you think people make assumptions about a person based on the whether they can curl their tongues or have freckles or not? Why?
- Do you think people make assumptions about a person based on the color of his or her skin? Why? How is this different than the other traits we looked at?
- How do you think that history, society, and culture has an impact on how we view each other?

As Catholics, we believe that God uses scripture to speak to us. That is why the first part of Mass , called the Liturgy of the Word, is dedicated to the reading and interpretation of scripture.

We also know that Jesus paid a lot of attention to the Old Testament, which was the whole Jewish scripture. He frequently quotes it and refers to it.

## Scripture Reading for Lesson Plan on Racism

Read all or part of this from First Corinthians:

[1 Corinthians 12:12-30 or 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 27](#) (There are many parts but one body) – the Second Reading for the [3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year C](#)

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Brothers and sisters:

As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. Now the body is not a single part, but many.]

If a foot should say, "Because I am not a hand I do not belong to the body," it does not for this reason belong any less to the body.

Or if an ear should say, "Because I am not an eye I do not belong to the body," it does not for this reason belong any less to the body.

If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?

But as it is, God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended.

If they were all one part, where would the body be? But as it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you," nor again the head to the feet, "I do not need you."

Indeed, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are all the more necessary, and those parts of the body that we consider less honorable we surround with greater honor, and our less presentable parts are treated with greater propriety, whereas our more presentable parts do not need this.

But God has so constructed the body as to give greater honor to a part that is without it, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another.

If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy.]

Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it.

[Some people God has designated in the church to be, first, apostles; second, prophets; third, teachers; then, mighty deeds; then gifts of healing, assistance, administration, and varieties of tongues.

Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work mighty deeds? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?]

[1 Corinthians 12:12-30 or 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 27](#)

## **Discussion for Lesson Plan on Racism**

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Racism is a part of our society. We would like to say that we are “color blind” but in truth all people have biases to some degree. These can be due to our instinctive desire to associate with people like ourselves, or due to messages we see daily in the media, or from the family environment we were raised in. In order to confront racism, we must first be able to look at ourselves and recognize that biases are part of our nature.

However, that doesn’t mean we need to act on those biases. In fact, through awareness of our own bias we can learn to recognize when we are acting unfairly or stereotyping others just based on skin color or ethnicity.

Individual racism is when a person feels superior to another person due to the color of his or her skin. White supremacy is an example of this. Using racial slurs is another example. Hopefully most of us know this is wrong and would not take part in this type of blatant personal racism. However, if we are unaware of our own biases, we can unconsciously make snap judgments about people who are different than us and even act based on those judgments. This is more subtle and something to watch out for.

Institutional racism is a different matter. This is where the majority class (whites) enact rules and constructs in society which favor themselves at the expense of others. And even when these rules are changed or dismantled, their impact can last much longer. (Show The Disturbing History of the Suburbs here).

So why should this be a concern to us? We did not enact these laws.

In 1 Corinthians 12:26 we heard

If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy.

As Christians, we are called to share in the suffering and joys of all of our brothers and sisters. We do not exist independently of each other. We are all connected and called to walk together. This is called solidarity.

St. John Paul II said

Solidarity “is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all”

So when any members of society are hurting, we are called to improve the situation, even if we are not personally responsible for their situation. Consider this quote from DOCAT, the social justice companion to YOUCAT, which is the youth catechism of the Catholic Church:

103. For a believer, what is the most radical reason to practice solidarity? The solidarity of Jesus. No one ever practiced greater solidarity than Jesus. Jesus was sent as the living sign of God’s solidarity with mankind, which cannot help itself. The Son of God not only declares his solidarity with all mankind; he even lays down his life for us. This definitive self-giving for

the sake of others represents the highest possible love and solidarity and should become the standard for Christian action.

Jesus gave us the perfect example of solidarity in the incarnation. He humbled himself to take our form. So we need to look at ourselves in humility and consider how we can help our brothers and sisters who are not offered equal resources.

It is clear from Church teaching that we have a responsibility to do what we can to level the playing field. Structures in our society over a long period of time have resulted in discrimination and deep prejudice, resulting in advantages for the majority over the minority. It will take a long time to dismantle these racist structures, but every little thing we can do is good and pleasing to our loving Father.

At this point in the lesson plan on racism, if time permits, do a [Privilege Walk](#).

## Reflection Questions for Lesson Plan on Racism

- Break into small groups and discuss as time permits. Here are some questions to get you started: Are you aware of your own biases? Do you ever make snap judgments when you see someone based on the color of their skin or how they are dressed?
- How do you react when you make a judgment? Do you try not to think about it or are you able to take a deeper look to see where it came from?
- Think of a situation when you were obviously in the minority? How did that make you feel. Did you seek out people you felt more comfortable with? Why?
- Have you ever experienced an incident of racism? How did it make you feel?
- Can you think of any examples of institutional racism? What might you personally be able to do to change these structures?
- When you are with people who are a different than you and that puts them at a disadvantage, do you think they would be better off if they were more like you? Why? Have you considered that perhaps they shouldn't have to change the way they dress or act to have the same advantages as you.
- How can you practice solidarity with people in your community?
- What can you learn from the solidarity practiced by Jesus? How can your faith life help with some of the issues we have been discussing?
- What is something positive this group can do to recognize all people as God's beloved sons and daughters?

## Challenge for Lesson Plan on Racism

This week, try to be aware of your own biases and consider how those impact your actions. Watch for opportunities to speak up for equality or just to be compassionate and be aware that we can't always understand what people who are different than us are experiencing.

*If the group wants to go deeper after this lesson plan on racism, consider if there is an action step you can take. Perhaps you can join in an appropriate civil rights activity in your area. Check with the social justice office in your local diocese.*

## **Prayer for Lesson Plan on Racism**

*Gather together and pray the [Prayer for an End to Racism](#) or another appropriate prayer. Let each youth offer his or her own intentions. You can suggest they focus their intentions on unfairness, whether related to racism or some other cause..*