



**Diocese of Lansing:
Response to the 10 recommendations
made by the Task Force on Race & Catholic Schools**

1. *The task force requested that the diocese provide guiding principles for valuing diversity, equity and inclusion.*

On 14 November 2018, Bishop Boyea formally endorsed the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' formal statement, "Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love, A Pastoral Letter Against Racism", on behalf of the Diocese of Lansing. It can be viewed [here](#).

The pastoral letter recalls that we are all brothers and sisters, all equally made in the image of God. Because we all bear the image of God, racism is above all a moral and theological problem that manifests institutionally and systematically. Only a deep individual conversion of heart, which then multiplies, will compel change and reform in our institutions and society. This was the first collective statement on race by the bishops of the United States in 40 years.

Bishop Boyea has now issued this pastoral letter to all schools within the Diocese of Lansing with the instruction that it be used as the foundational document in catechizing staff, parents and students on matters of racial equity.

2. *The task force requested that the diocese should consider having a lead person within the diocesan administration that is a resource to schools on responding to diversity related matters.*

Bishop Boyea has instructed the four-person Diocesan Office of Catholic Schools to lead on this issue. As per the recommendations of the task force, Bishop Boyea has asked them to clearly communicate the values of the diocese on racial and ethnic diversity to students, staff and parents as set out in "Open Wide Our Hearts". He has also requested that they implement workshops that will develop the capacity of schools to address any instances of racial or ethnic discrimination.

3. *The task force requested the adoption of formal policies and procedures by schools for addressing complaints consistent with guiding principles.*

Bishop Boyea has already instructed that a formal complaints procedure be included in the code of conduct of each Catholic school. This will be made available to parents and students, both present and prospective, as part of any general prospectus for each school.

- 4. The task force requested more leadership development including building capacity of leaders to lead diocesan schools.*

This process has already begun. On 8 August 2019, all Catholic school principals within the Diocese of Lansing met to focus upon the USCCB's pastoral letter of racial justice. This day introduced the principals to the USCCB's lesson plans and activities on addressing racism plus the USCCB's lesson plans and activities on faithful citizenship. Bishop Boyea has made clear he expects such workshops to become a regular feature of school life.

- 5. The task force recommended more education and development for teachers and other school staff in addressing these issues.*

This process has already begun. On 11 October 2019 there will be a diocesan-wide all teacher pastoral development day on the issue of racial justice. The framework for the day will be the USCCB's Building Intercultural Competence for Ministers. The keynote speakers will be Deacon Larry Oney, a renowned African-American preacher from the Archdiocese of New Orleans, and Father Stephen Dudek of Grand Rapids Diocese. Father Dudek is the author of the training program, "Missionary Discipleship: The Art and Spirituality of Pastoring in a Culturally Diverse Diocese". He has served as a pastor in culturally diverse parishes for more than 30 years including English, Spanish and Vietnamese speaking parishioners. Breakout sessions will be provided by Michigan Virtual on social emotional learning and intercultural competency. As also recommended by the task force, these in-service training days will include sports coaching staff.

- 6. The task force recommended workshops to orientate parents and guardians on its goals to be a more diverse and inclusive community for all students.*

The Diocesan Office of Catholic Schools is actively exploring options to replicate the aforementioned workshops with parents and guardians beginning with the 2020-21 school year.

- 7. The task force suggested implementing more programs that will enhance student experiences on race and broader issues of diversity and inclusion and implement programs that will facilitate cross-cultural understanding and engagement.*

This Fall, the Diocesan Office of Catholic Schools have been completing an audit of all the programs and initiatives that presently exist within diocesan schools that help facilitate cross-cultural understanding and engagement. School presidents and principals from across the diocese's 4 regional high schools and 28 elementary schools will meet in coming weeks to discuss the findings in order to identify and share good practice.

- 8. The task force recommended fostering greater diversity among school staff and faculty including giving human resources personnel the tools necessary to recruit, hire and retain diverse teachers and staff.*

A new scholarship aimed at increasing the number of Catholic minority teachers among school staff will be launched for the 2020-21 school year. It will help towards tuition costs for Catholic persons of color who wish to transition into teaching within a Catholic school via the State of Michigan's Teachers of Tomorrow program. The value of tuition assistance will be up to \$2,500. That's 50% of the tuition. Its patroness will be St. Katharine Drexel (1858 – 1955), the great pioneer of educational advancement for Native Americans and African Americans.

- 9. The task force recommended fostering greater diversity among the student population.*

A new scholarship aimed at increasing the number of Catholic African American students in the Diocese of Lansing's Catholic schools will be launched in the 2020-21 school year. It will operate under the patronage of Venerable Augustus Tolton (1854 – 97), a former slave who became the first African American priest in the United States. This tuition assistance is need-based and is worth up to \$500 a year.

These two new scholarships are in addition to an already existing Diocesan scholarship program for Hispanic Catholic students which presently operates only in the Lansing and Flint areas but which the Diocese of Lansing now aspires to extend across the entire diocese. This also offers needs-based tuition assistance of up to \$500 a year. This scholarship will now be placed under the patronage of Saint José Sánchez del Río (1913 – 28), young Mexican martyr who was put to death by

government officials because he refused to renounce his Catholic faith. Details of all scholarships can be found on our Diocese of Lansing Catholic Schools website.

10. *The task force recommended implementing a pilot program at Lansing Catholic High School that would integrate Facing History and Ourselves into their curriculum for the 2019-20 school year.*

On Monday 5 August, 2019, the Chairwoman of the Diocesan Task Force on Race in Catholic Schools, Dr. Joan Jackson Johnson, met with Bishop Boyea. They both agreed that the Facing History and Ourselves program was inappropriate for Catholic schools due to its curriculum content on other moral issues including marriage and the family. Instead, Diocese of Lansing schools will now use educational resources for Grades K to 8 and for high schools which are produced by the USCCB's Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism.

Footnote: Bishop Boyea has instructed the Diocese of Lansing Board of Education to monitor the progress made on each of these 10 recommendations and to report to him at regular intervals on these matters.

11 October, 2019,
Feast of Pope St John XXIII