

Subversive Habits Book Study

Session One: Preface and Introduction

offered by FutureChurch

Opening Prayer

Ever present God, you called us to be in relationship with one another and promised to dwell wherever two or three are gathered. In our community, we are many different people; we come from many different places, have many different cultures. Open our hearts that we may be bold in finding the riches of inclusion and the treasures of diversity among us.

We pray:

When our eyes do not see the gravity of racial injustice,
Shake us from our slumber and open us up.

When out of fear we are frozen into inaction,
Give us a spirit of bravery.

When we try our best but say the wrong things,
Give us a spirit of humility.

When the chaos of this dies down,
Give us a lasting spirit of solidarity.

When it becomes easier to point fingers outward,
Help us to examine our own hearts.

God of truth, in your wisdom, Enlighten Us.
God of love, in your mercy, Forgive Us.
God of hope in your kindness, Heal Us.
Creator of All People, in your generosity, Guide Us.

Racism breaks your heart,
break our hearts for what breaks yours, O God.

We make this prayer, through Christ Jesus, AMEN.

- Slightly Adapted from a prayer
by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, JR.

Small Group Questions:

- What was new for you in the readings for today? Which aspects of this history brought you sorrow? Hope?
- How did it feel for you to learn the extent of the Catholic Church's complicity in slavery? What could the Church do to make racial justice a greater reality today?
- When you think about the work of religious sisters in the United States, work that we rightly admire, how do you feel when you read about the fact that they were slaveholders or used slave labor? that they excluded Black women from their communities for a period of time? that they practiced segregation in their communities when Black women were accepted?

Large Group Chat Sharing Responses

I am feeling a sense of deep gratitude for the people in my small group who shared their struggles and their hope.

What does repentance look like for our religious communities?

I'm grateful for the wisdom of the three other people in my breakout group. Hopeful

What does reparations look like? We need truth-telling and education in our congregations, parishes and schools.

I pray for perseverance for myself and other white Catholics not to turn away from this unjust past and present of racism, but to work to end it

Help us, Jesus, to bring your sense of justice, compassion, and healing to all.

One question that was asked: What do I do with this struggle?

"We cannot afford to be bystanders any longer"

When our hierarchy in the US continue to back many white supremacist ideas... what can we do to change this... where should we work for change?

Hard to sit in the truth of our history and my/our racism.

Regardless of past experiences, once I know the truth of racism, I am responsible for confronting it.

a lot of work to do to end racism even in our church.

Gratitude to Dr. Williams for writing this book and for the women who shared their stories.

I am grateful to have this opportunity to learn more about our history as a Church that I've been blind to my entire life. Lord, have mercy.

Our Eucharistic table should be open to ALL... and yet we have some bishops who forbid the singing of "All Are Welcome"... it pains me that they do not believe this.

Beth in our group found it surprising how "counter-cultural" was the idea that Black religious initially to the reigning racist ideology

Our majority white congregation needs to educate ourselves about our complicity in White supremacy first of all, then consider how to make reparations that are meaningful to those we have harmed.

Hello. I was in Group 17. We had a deep and real conversation about anti-racism and white fragility. This group gave me hope and I want them to know I will hold each one in prayer.

My hope is that we might empower one another to be better advocates for racial justice

It's amazing to me that black women have stayed in the church after so much abuse. I wonder if it isn't a cop out for me to leave the traditional church for a small faith community.

Any thoughts on reparations from the Catholic Church to Black, Brown and Red peoples?

a MIX of shame, sorrow, grief, lament for such treatment of these women, but also, the great inspiration of their Faith, dedication to God's people and determination to keep on, in spite of What a depth of GRACE in them. Bless us all with this, please dear sisters.

We need to open our eyes, ears and hearts and take responsibility for change.

Remember the victims, their trauma and the generations living with that trauma.

In our group, knowing some of the day to day struggles that Black parishes are facing to get Black priests as pastors. Even when there many African priests assigned to white parishes, but again the white privilege gives white parishes an advantage of sorts as where priests are assigned.

I think for me one important task is to reconcile the image I had of women religious leading the way on social justice issues, educating children of color, etc. with information about the ways in which their whiteness led to exclusion of women of color from full community participation

Thank God we are now collectively recognizing and addressing our needs for conversion and learning to be co-liberators with people of color, our brothers and sisters.

It seems to me the first and most difficult task for our church is to admit its wrongdoing and complicity in white supremacist ways of being.

I am a white woman and grew up in a white culture. I have never had to make an accommodation. Anyone who is not white has had to learn and live within this culture and make accommodation. What richness we are missing by not welcoming the culture, background, history and experience of others.

The resource I spoke of available from the Archdiocese of Cincinnati can be found at <https://resources.catholicaoc.org/offices/catholic-social-action/racism-privilege> Thank you Marian for sharing and who taught me about Archbishop Lyke Conference that celebrates gifts that Black Catholics bring to liturgies and ministries <https://www.lykeconference.com/>

The blessing of continued HOPE they have brought to their endeavors

I am grateful to my small group for making me feel not so alone!

so many lingering questions...What could be done in our communities, besides workshops and book groups, to deepen awareness of this history and the reality of racism? What might reparation from our Church look like besides a sincere apology?

We need to educate the young in our Catholic Schools to know the past and not repeat this history of racism.

How early slaveholding was so endemic to the roots of U.S. Catholicism (and taking of indigenous people's land via "the doctrine of discovery). Not only the White House, but also Georgetown University was built by slaves

We were 4 white women of a somewhat similar age, from a variety of geographical areas & experiences. I thank my "sister" participants for their trust and respect to share our own experiences in the past and hope for a "wiser" future.

I am thinking about the power and pervasiveness of willful ignorance. How to loosen the fear that causes that.

This book has been a challenging read. But I'm proud that our Black sisters were and still are determined to follow their hearts' desires and all of us, regardless of color, are the better for it.

I have a comment to help in this problem of acceptance of all people to each other and that is to treat everyone as you would have them to treat u. That is what Jesus taught that when u treated others unjustly u did it unto ME! This takes a conversion of the heart. Everyone must pray to Our Lord for this change of Heart. This would solve all problems Think and treat others as u want to be treated.

It is painful to know that we as white Catholics have hurt so many Black women, men and children. I, for one want to transform myself, my community, my church, and my world. I want to give myself over to this work each day. No more Brianne Taylors. No more George Floyds. No more trash talk from churchmen like Gomez. We need voices who call for justice.

As we conversed learned of some practices that are not very Christian let alone catholic which has had me concerned in last several years. am reading to inform myself of what has happened in the CC, grew up with an involved community and sorely missing it. Don't know if it's reflection of the times.

We white Catholics have to put on new "glasses" to see the painful, very real and current suffering we continue to impose on Black Catholics, and all Black people. We must pick up the cross of owning our responsibility for the Church being a "safe space" for racism, camouflaged with piety...

I think the Black sisters who persevered in the white congregations should be canonized as saints!

I am overwhelmed by the gracious and generous spirit of black brothers and sisters walking with us white people in our attempt to heal racism and white supremacy/privilege. So much to learn and to repent!

Thank you for the opportunity to share, to learn from each other..gives me hope that we, too, can stand on the Word of God as Sister Anita said. can we see the challenge and the miracle?

40 years ago I encountered a family in the parish whose daughter was denied entrance into the white congregation that taught in the parish high school. She was referred to a Black community in Harlem in the 1950s. I remember being scandalized in learning about this family but also thought that it was an exception to the rule. But reading the book I know that that was the general practice and it causes more pain even now to think about how it happened. That woman did pursue her vocation and was celebrating her 25th anniversary as a school principal in Harlem. She is truly a woman of faith and a heroine from the parish.

These Black women are the ones who are TRULY living the Gospel. Left outside of the hierarchy they have done the real work of God.

What does reparation look like? How do we lay the foundation? I do believe we need to learn our history first. But we can't stop there. Our prayer and learning has to translate into action.

Perhaps a practical reparation would be for every diocese to commit to not closing any more Black churches, but instead to find a way to keep them fully funded, active, and vibrant.

We as Catholics were the genesis of racism in this country. We have to be genesis of transformation of hearts and minds. We must embody this way of life—treating each other with justice, mercy, humility and love...always

I so loved Sr. Anita's witness. She grounds me in a reality that I cannot know because of my whiteness. It is so good and healing for me.

I had no idea how extensive and blatant the racism was. Also, the same prejudice was present in men's communities also.

It is useful to consider how we treat people and land. There are similarities.

The church needs to follow the Pope's example. Apologize. Then consider how to heal and reparations. The Church can be a leader for racial justice by telling the truth, apologizing and

Just Faith Ministries has a three part anti-racism seminar for parishes that is excellent! <https://justfaith.org/faith-and-racial-equity-exploring-power-and-privilege/>

"Building Sisterhood: A Feminist History of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Monroe, MI) tells of the roots of their order in the Oblate Sisters of Providence (Syracuse U Press, 1995). The three IHM congregations and the Oblates have formed a "Healing Racism Committee" that offers annual retreats. Also the story of the IHM co-foundress, Theresa Maxis Duchemin, who was the superior of the Oblates, is an interesting perspective on how racism and patriarchy exerted influence in 19th c. US congregations.

FutureChurch is now working with CARA to conduct a study on the disproportionate closings of Black Catholic Churches. We want to lay out the data and work for reparations and keep Black parishes open.

We have only scratched the surface of awareness

With all of the hateful rhetoric and violence that is so rampant in today's society, it is so heartwarming to read these genuine comments of love, concern and hope.

We stand on the shoulders of these Black women. We need to continue to honor their struggle and work on bettering the communities we are a part.

Amen. We stand on the shoulders of Black Women who stayed and struggled against evil.

Including keeping the schools opened as well so necessary to understanding the racist practices of the church and how to be change agents thank you so much for this sharing of the introduction to the book and experiences of the sisters. We must stay connected blessings peace joy and songs in your hearts

Yes, we need to uplift these Black women and help to carry them now!

I loved hearing from Sr. Anita Baird.

Closing Prayer

Dear God,

In our efforts to dismantle racism, we understand that we struggle not merely against flesh and blood but against powers and principalities – those institutions and systems that keep racism alive by perpetuating the lie that some members of the family are inferior and others superior.

Create in us a new mind and heart that will enable us to see our family in the faces of those divided by racial categories.

Give us the grace and strength to rid ourselves of racial stereotypes that oppress some of us while providing entitlements to others.

Help us to create a church and a nation that embraces the hopes and fears of oppressed people of color where we live, as well as those around the world.

Heal your family God, and make us one with you, in union with Jesus, and empowered by your Holy Spirit. AMEN

-Pax Christi