

“It’s not who we are meant to be”: Reflections from the Fall Semester’s Reading Group

This past fall semester, more than sixty members of faculty and staff joined conversations on Catholicism and racism. The groups convened to pay attention to voices crying out for the Catholic community to come to terms with its past and continuing racism.

The groups discussed short articles on topics such as the doctrine of discovery, white supremacy among Catholic leadership in some white supremacist groups, and the varying tones Catholic social teaching has taken toward racism. Among others, the group read pieces by Bryan Massingale, Shannen Dee Williams, Damian Costello, and M. Shawn Copeland.

The conversations raised awareness of systemic racism within our society and the Church. One participant stated that their knowledge “was expanded by both the readings and the discussion with others. Knowledge is the vital first ingredient in helping the Church work towards reparations and making amends for historical injustices.” Others became aware that “racism is a significant element of the history of Catholic Church.” This, however, should not define who we are. “It’s not who we are meant to be,” one participant noted. “I find both discouragement – and hope – in our tradition.” As one member of the group stated, “I would like UD to be a place where Catholicism means seeking continual conversion so that we can know and love God.” And as another participant explained, “through this awareness we are moved to dialogue and work together for a better future for all.”

The conversations on Catholicism and racism are continuing in many ways:

- The Fr. Ferree Chair of Social Justice invites proposals to join a multidisciplinary cohort engaging in scholarly work on anti-racism and Catholicism during the summer 2021. **ADD LINK**
- Faculty and staff who are looking for more opportunities to explore their commitment to anti-racism can find resources at UD’s [Inclusive Excellence Academy](#). A full bibliography of the fall semester’s reading group is available under this link.
- *The Department of Religious Studies has begun a book read on Willie James Jennings’ most recent work [After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging](#).*