
Racial Healing & The Rule of St. Benedict: Agenda for September 12, 2021

12:30pm	Welcome (Sr. Anna-Camille & Marilyn) Opening Prayer (Anna & Brian)
12:40pm	About This Program (Brian)
12:50pm	Community of Trust Guidelines (Susan & readers) A note about RSB context (Marilyn) Rule of St Benedict Teachings (Bonnie & RH Team)
1:10pm	Our Struggles with Racial Healing (Kathy) <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Large Group Overview of “Our Struggles with Racial Healing” (3 mins)● Individual Reflection & Writing Time (15 mins)● Small Groups Breakout (facilitated) (20 mins)<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Which racial healing question resonates most with you? How so?○ Which RSB teachings do you imagine would be most helpful and healing for you?
1:50pm	Break (10 mins)
2:00pm	Lectio Divina (Large Group Overview – Marilyn) Lectio Divina (Small Groups – RH Team Facilitators)
2:30pm	RSB Teaching (Large Group Overview - Bonnie) <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Present out loud – (Bonnie & Oblates volunteer readers)● Silence/Journaling
2:40pm	Closing Prayer (Barbara, Susan & Sr. Anna-Camille)
2:50pm	Oblate Assignments for October (Marilyn) (Read before our October 10th Oblate Session)
2:50pm	Announcements (Sr. Anna-Camille)
3:00pm	Session Ends

Welcome & Opening Prayer (Anna & Brian)

We are called to be transformed by the renewing of our mind.

Today, we will take the advice of Howard Thurman in his prayer “Our Little Lives” and place racial injustice on God’s altar, and rest in God’s sustaining grace.

Our Little Lives

Our little lives, our big problems—these we place upon Your altar!

The quietness in Your temple of silence again and again rebuffs us: For some there is no discipline to hold them steady in the waiting, And the minds reject the noiseless invasion of Your spirit.

For some there is no will to offer what is central in the thoughts — The confusion is so manifest, there is no starting place to take hold.

For some the evils of the world tear down all concentrations And scatter the focus of the high resolves.

We do not know how to do what we know to do.

We do not know how to be what we know to be.

Our little lives, our big problems—these we place upon Your altar!

Pour out upon us whatever our spirits need of shock, of life, of release That we may find strength for these days—

Courage and hope for tomorrow.

In confidence we rest in Your sustaining grace

Which makes possible triumph in defeat, gain in loss, and love in hate. We rejoice this day to say:

Our little lives, our big problems—these we place upon Your altar!

Amen.

About This Program (Brian)

“Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.” — James Baldwin

No one wants to talk about race, especially at church. Especially at a *white* church. It is awkward and explosive, and there is no better way to sabotage the stewardship campaign than to bring up a subject that a third of the congregation is not going to like or agree with. But ignoring a gaping wound only leads to infection: it is only through acknowledging racism that we can work toward healing.

For this reason, we at JustFaith Ministries want to say *thank you* for having the courage to help make our beloved Church better. If you are a white person, you had the option to ignore the problem. Most likely, you could have chosen to carry out your life in white spaces where you feel comfortable, from your grocery store to your workplace to your gym or your church. You could have opted out of the conversation and saved yourself the stress. Out of sight, out of mind.

If you are a person of color, you are taking a risk upon entering this conversation, and we are grateful. Chances are, you have to deal with racism day in and day out, and despite your exhaustion, you are choosing to invest your free time and energy in this group. You did not have the choice to “opt out” of the nation’s debate on race, as your day-to-day life is affected by the repercussions of this argument. But you certainly had a choice to “opt in” to this conversation, and the grace that your presence implies does not go unappreciated.

We at JustFaith Ministries have spent a lot of time planning how to have this conversation in a way that:

Acknowledges who we are, while affirming all people: Conversations about race can be burdensome and hurtful to people of color, who are often pressured to talk about traumatic experiences, assume the teacher role, or speak on behalf of “all Latinx people,” “all black people,” etc. JustFaith does not take this fact lightly, and we hope we have provided sufficient instruction and material to engage in dialogue that truly affirms the identity and experience of all people, particularly people of color. However, we also acknowledge that our JustFaith community is mostly white. While we dream of the day when our own community makeup reflects that of the constituency of the Kingdom of God, in the meantime, we feel we have an important role to play in awakening white churches to the reality of privilege and racism.

Community of Trust Guidelines (Susan)

Note: *Racial Healing & The Rule of St Benedict* is adapted from JustFaith Ministries *Faith and Racial Healing: Embracing Truth, Justice and Restoration*

JustFaith's Community of Trust Guidelines are Adapted by Anne and Tom Johnson from:

- *Circle of Trust® Touchstones developed by Parker J. Palmer and the Center for Courage & Renewal www.couragerenewal.org (primary source)*
- *JustFaith Group Guidelines www.JustFaith.org*

Give and receive welcome. People learn best in hospitable spaces. In this community, we support each other's learning by giving and receiving welcome.

Be as fully present as possible. Be here with your doubts, fears, and failings, as well as your convictions, joys, and successes, your listening as well as your speaking. Listen intently in order to fully understand different points of view. Honor the space between "no longer" and "not yet."

What is offered in our community is by invitation, not demand. Share what your soul calls for, and know that you do it with our support. Commit to ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to speak. Invite others to speak before speaking again.

Speak your truth in ways that respect other people's truth. Our views of reality may differ, but speaking one's truth in our community does not mean interpreting, correcting, or debating what others say. Knowing that we are each created uniquely, and have different backgrounds, experiences, and views, we commit to honoring differences, knowing they add to the richness of the community's experience.

No fixing, saving, advising, or correcting. This is one of the hardest guidelines for those of us who like to "help." But it is vital to welcoming the soul, to making space for the inner teacher.

When the going gets tough, turn to wonder. If you feel judgmental or defensive, ask yourself:

- "I wonder what brought her to this belief?"
- "I wonder what he's feeling right now?"
- "I wonder what my reaction teaches me about myself?"

Set aside judgment to listen to others — and to yourself — more deeply.

Attend to your own inner teacher. We learn from others, of course. But as we explore prayer, readings, questions and silence, as well as engage with people both inside and outside our community, we have a special opportunity to learn from within. So pay close attention to your own reactions and responses, which are your most important teacher.

Trust and learn from the silence. Silence is a gift in our noisy world and a way of knowing in itself. Treat silence as a member of the group. After someone has spoken, take time to reflect without immediately filling the space with words.

Observe deep confidentiality. Our community of trust depends on knowing that whatever we say will remain with the people to whom we choose to say it — whether in small groups or in the large circle — and will never be passed on to others without our explicit permission.

Know that it's possible.... To leave a meeting of our community with whatever it was you needed when you arrived and that the seeds planted here can keep growing in the days ahead.

The Rule of Saint Benedict (RSB) Teachings

The RSB Teachings have been drawn from The Rule of Saint Benedict (cite certain text?) by St. Placid Oblate, Bonnie Westmark.

“It is high time for us to arise from sleep.” {Rom 13:11} {RB Prologue: 8}

“Turn away from evil and do good; let peace be your quest and aim.” {Ps 33 [34]:14-15} {RB Prologue: 17}

“Who will dwell in your tent, Lord; who will find rest upon your holy mountain? {Ps.14[15]:1} {RB Pro:23} “One who has not wronged a fellowman in any way.” {Ps14[15]:2-3} {RB Pro:26}

“The good of all concerned~safeguard love” {RB Pro:47}

“He is not to love one more than another.” {RB 2:17}

“A man born free is not to be given higher rank than a slave who becomes a monk.” {RB 2:18}

“Whether slave or free, we are all one in Christ {Gal 3:28;Eph 6:8} and share alike in bearing arms in the service of the one Lord, for God shows no partiality among persons.” {Rom2:11} {RB 2:20}

“Only in this are we distinguished in his sight: if we are found better than others in good works and in humility.” {RB 2:21}

“Show equal love to everyone.” {RB 2:22}

“First of all, love the Lord God with your whole heart, your whole soul, and all your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself.” {Matt 22:37-39; Mark 12:30-31; Luke 10:27} {RB 4:1}

“You must honor everyone {1 Pet 2:17} and never do to another what you do not want done to yourself.” {Tob 4:16, Matt 7:12; Luke 6:31} {RB 4:8-9}

“Go to help the troubled and console the sorrowing.” {RB 4:18}

“They should each try to be the first to show respect to one another.” {Rom 12:10} {RB 72:4}

“Earnestly compete in obedience to one another.” {RB 72:6}

“Let them prefer nothing whatever to Christ, and may he bring us all together to everlasting life.” {RB 72:12}

What other specific passages from The Rule do you find to be especially relevant teachings for racial healing?

Our Struggles with Racial Healing

(Read the questions and respond to one or two that resonate with you.)

When have I known the pain of racism/oppression from racist structures?

What painful memories still linger within me?

What sadness, anger or discouragements do I have about the history of racism in my country?

Where have I found – or where am I finding – healing in a racist society?

For what kind of healing do I hope and pray for our racially unjust systems?

What kind of learnings or challenges do I need to embrace as I understand my contributions to or benefits from racially unjust systems?

Lectio Divina

“Benedict reminds us that the first tool of Good Works is love. We strive to have all our thoughts and actions flow from love. We are told to always answer with love, obey with love, foster zeal with love, receive all guests with love, correct, instruct and serve with love. We are told to love those who are outside the community, to love with equity, and above all to love Christ.

‘...your way of acting should be different from the world’s way.’ (RB4:20)”

(Oblate Reflections: Living the Rule of Benedict by the Oblates of St. Benedict, St. Placid Priory; p.8)

Lectio Process

Prepare:

- Take a moment to come fully into the present.
- Sit comfortably alert, eyes closed, and center yourself with breathing.
- Invite yourself to be present to the Spirit.

1. Lectio: Read/hear the Word. First reading (read twice). Listen for the word or phrase that attracts you from the passage. Repeat it over to yourself softly during a one minute silence. When the leader gives the signal, each person in the group, in turn, may say aloud that word or phrase (no elaboration) or they may pass.

2. Meditatio: Consider, “How is my life touched?” (by this/these words) Second reading. Listen to discover how your life is touched today by this passage. Consider possibilities or receive a sensory impression or image during the two minutes of silence. When the leader gives the signal, speak a sentence or two beginning with “I hear, I see, or I sense” or you may pass.

3. Oratio: Ask, “Is there an invitation here?” (for you) Third reading. Listen to discover a possible invitation relevant for this month. Ponder it for two minutes in silence. When the leader gives the signal, share briefly with your group or you may pass.

4. Contemplatio: Rest in prayer. Pray aloud, or silently for God to help the person on your right respond to their invitation. After each spoken or silent prayer, the one who prays says “Amen” followed by a group “Amen.”

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Closing Prayer (Barbara, Susan, Sr. Anna-Camille)

Invite everyone into a moment of silence. Center the group with this reflection.

In the work of racial healing we will do better.

(Pause)

In acknowledging who has power and privilege we will do better.

(Pause)

In changing racist systems and structures we will do better.

(Pause)

In the work of racial healing we will do better.

(Pause)

In refusing to conform to the pattern of this world we will do better.

(Pause)

Above all, trust in the slow work of God.

(Pause)

We are, quite naturally, impatient in everything to reach the end without delay. We would like to skip the intermediate stages.

(Pause)

We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new, and yet it is the law of all progress that progress is made by passing through some stages of uncertainty, and that may take a very long time.

(Pause)

And so I think it is with you; your ideas mature gradually.
Let them grow; let them shape themselves.
Do not try to force them on, as though you could be today
what time and grace will make you tomorrow.

(Pause)

Only God can say what this new spirit gradually forming within you will be.
Give God the benefit of your believing that the Spirit is leading you.
Accept the anxiety of feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete.

-Teilhard de Chardin

The Two Books for this Program

Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing

Author: Dr. Joy DeGruy

The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism

Author: Jemar Tisby

ASSIGNMENT: to be read before October 10th Oblate session

- *The Color of Compromise*: Forward, Chapter 1
- *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*: Introduction & Chapter 1
- *African Roots* (see below in this Participant Packet)
- Optional: 1619 Podcast: Episode 1 <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/23/podcasts/1619-slavery-anniversary.html>

African Roots

(to be read before October 10th Oblate session)

What is Africa to me:

*Copper sun or scarlet sea,
Jungle star or jungle track,*

*Strong bronzed men, or regal black
Women from whose loins I sprang
When the birds of Eden sang?
One three centuries removed
From the scenes his fathers loved,
Spicy grove, cinnamon tree,
What is Africa to me?*

“Heritage” by Countee Cullen

What?

African roots of African Americans

Leone Bennett, Jr. (1928-2018), an African American scholar, author, and social historian, stresses that the story of African Americans begins not with slavery, but with the great empires of the Sudan and Nile Valley in Africa. In his seminal book *Before the Mayflower: A History of the Negro in America 1619-1964*, chapter 1 is entitled, “The African Past” and begins by saying, “Africa, long considered the Dark Continent, is now regarded as the place where man first received light. Ancient Africans, long considered primitive and ignorant, are now revealed as creative contributors to Egyptian civilization and builders of powerful states in the Sudan.”

Here are a few excerpts from that chapter:

- For some 600,000 years, Africa and Africans led the world...(They) gave the world fire and tools and cultivated grain.” (p. 5)

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- Black people were known and honored throughout the ancient world. (p. 5)
 - Agriculture was the basis of economic life, although herding and artistry were important. Specialization was advanced, with one tribe, for example, concentrating on metallurgy (the science of producing, mixing, and extracting metals) and bartering with another tribe which specialized in weaving or farming. (p. 23)
 - Iron was known and used from the Atlantic Ocean to Ethiopia. With simple bellows and charcoal fire, the Africans smelted iron and manufactured beautiful instruments... Neither ancient Europe, nor ancient Western Asia, nor ancient China knew iron, and everything points to its introduction from Africa. (pp 23-24)
 - Though not reduced to writing, African languages were far from simple. Swahili refutes the general belief that languages of “primitive” peoples consist largely of grunts, groans, and mixed-up idea. Swahili has a euphony that is comparable to Italian, with clear, distinct sounds, vowel endings, and a most pleasing arrangement of syllables. (p 25)
 - Religion and art were life expressions. Art was not for art’s sake, but for life’s sake. Men and women danced because dancing had a social and religious meaning. Many characteristics of religion, art, music, and dance of African Americans are rooted in Africa. For example, before the coming of the white man, music and rhythm were everyday things in Africa. Music was everywhere and it was grounded in two techniques which survived in the New World: polyrhythmic percussive technique and the call-and-response pattern (leader ad chorus alternating.) (pp 26-27)
 - European penetration and the slave trade debased much that was vital in African culture (p 23). Perhaps the survival of Africanisms in the New World was as great as it was because of the refusal of the members of the dominant group in America to extend, without reservations, their own culture to the Negroes whom they brought over.

Read – cut and paste this link into your Internet browser:

<https://www.history.com/news/7-influential-african-empires>

So What?a

The history of African Americans is often omitted from textbooks. Not only from history and social studies textbooks, but also from literature and the arts. Most curricula are Eurocentric. If African American history is included, it is often diminished, distorted, and “white-washed,” again, from a Eurocentric perspective. Some significant biographies of prominent black people may be displayed during February, or “Black History Month,” but what about the other eleven months? Also, most often when black history is not white-washed, it normally begins with slavery in 1619.

The omission of African Americans’ rich and noble African roots prior to 1619 was by design. As Malcolm X stated:

“We didn’t want anybody telling us anything about Africa, much less calling us Africans. In hating Africa and in hating the Africans, we ended up hating ourselves, without even realizing it.

Because you can't hate the roots of a tree and not hate the tree. You can't hate your origin and not end up hating yourself. You can't hate Africa and not hate yourself."

Read - Why Our African Identity Matters - cut and paste this link into your Internet browser:

<https://m.huffpost.com/us/entry/8947996/amp>

Now What?

- Learn more about the history of Africa from reliable resources
- For those who teach (including Sunday School and religious education), infuse the rich and noble history of Africa in American curricula
- Intentionally point out that African Americans, as the only peoples who were involuntarily and forcibly brought to this country and were thus separated from their ancestors and robbed of their history, deserve to regain exposure to their rich and noble roots.
- Encourage African American children, in particular, to learn about their rich and noble roots as an antidote to counter internalized racial oppression that leads to low self-esteem and self-hatred.
- Provide opportunities for more African Americans to become teachers. While all culturally sensitive teachers can inspire students, countless stories show that black teachers have a particularly powerful impact on black children. For example, an African American professional colleague shared that she was in 8th grade when she had her first black teacher. One day, the teacher challenged her to improve in math because she was an "A" student in every other subject, but was failing math. She told the teacher that black people aren't good in math, and so she couldn't do well. The teacher said to her, "black people invented math, and so you can do well because it's in your DNA." From that day forward, she started excelling and became an "A" student in math as well.
- Utilize existing opportunities, or create new ones, to encourage academic and career success of African Americans, based on rich ancestral roots.
- Explore ways to promote systemic changes to educational institutions regarding their perspective on African and African American history, including the incorporation of black history throughout the year — not just in February.