



## Most Reverend Raymond J. Boland

Bishop Emeritus

Diocese Kansas City ~ St. Joseph

### Racism in Our Society

March 31, 2001

**(Kansas City, MO)** Racism is the belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race. Racism is morally wrong. Racism is seriously sinful. One cannot be a good Christian and at the same time be a racist. A racist believes that God made him superior to everybody else. A racist denies the fact that God created all, not just some, people in his own image and likeness. A racist denies the God-given dignity of every human being. A racist cannot be a good American because he has to reject the Declaration of Independence where it proclaims that "all men are created equal" and "that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights" including "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

As the leader of the Catholic community in this city, I write to pledge our solidarity with the 15 black churches and two African American-owned businesses which were the recipients of hate mail some weeks ago. Currently hiding their venom and hatred through the contemptible use of anonymous letters, it is hoped that, upon discovery, the writer or writers will have an opportunity to share with all of us the source of their deep-seated rancor and bitterness.

It is easy to condemn racism. It is easy to enact laws forbidding the most blatant injustices caused by racism. It is not as easy to eradicate the vestiges of racism which reside in our hearts. But we must do so or otherwise the poison of racism will continue to flourish, albeit beneath the surface of a very "politically correct" fashion, to infect our children and future generations. This is no time for self-righteous posturing. We must never forget that we belong to a church, among many other institutions and churches, which has its own history of racism. It wasn't right in the past and it isn't right now. Racism is an expression of the power of evil in our midst. Our generation may not succeed in rooting it out completely but maybe, with God's help, we can blunt its viciousness sufficiently so that understanding and love and justice may find a more fertile soil in our diocesan community. Racial hatred must have no place in our city. All that would foster it must be eliminated, heart by heart, church by church and street by street.

*Bishop Boland's statement was issued to protest the racially motivated anonymous hate mail sent to African American clergy and business leaders in the metropolitan area.*