

LEARN ABOUT THE FAITH AND SHARE IT, 'BECAUSE JESUS SAYS SO'

“Why do you Catholics do that? What makes you think the Catholic vision of (fill-in-the-blank) is the truth?”



Ken Ogorek

We're not always great at explaining our faith to others. What if, when asked why we believe a basic doctrinal or moral teaching of the Church, we simply reply “Because Jesus says so,” and see where the conversation goes from there?

“I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you” (1 Cor 11:23).

This statement by St. Paul is the theme for Catechetical Sunday 2020, which is on Sept. 20. And Paul meant it!

When we hear the teaching of our holy Catholic Church, we are listening to the teaching of Christ. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit, who keeps his Church free from error in her basic doctrinal and moral teaching.

If a person isn't familiar with the authentic Jesus of sacred Scripture and sacred Tradition (and hence might be puzzled by one or more Church teachings) we have a great opportunity to share a bit about our disciple relationship with Jesus—lived in full communion with his body, the Church. Once a person knows who Jesus is (based on our witness), it's easier to understand why we embrace the teaching of the Church.

Also, even if a person struggles with a teaching, no one can argue with your witness. You're simply sharing who Jesus is in your life and why you find Church teaching to be good, true, beautiful and helpful—a gift from a loving God who knows us well and wants us to be happy, on Earth and in heaven.

As an article in this supplement highlights, the Holy See recently issued a new edition of a document called the *Directory for Catechesis*. This directory addresses both evangelization and catechesis, helping leaders at various levels facilitate these essential ministries.

Evangelization and catechesis are such essential areas of Church activity that each has its own office in the administrative structure of our archdiocese.

When you pray for Archbishop Charles C. Thompson and his ministry of leadership, when you participate in the United Catholic Appeal, when you help your parish catechetical and evangelization leaders with their collaborative efforts involving your pastor and the offices of evangelization and catechesis, you are helping to hand on what we've all received from the Lord. You are helping to fulfill the great commission of Jesus, who commands us not only to be his disciples, but also to make disciples and share all of his teaching, confident that he is with us until the end of the age.

I hope you enjoy this annual Evangelization and Catechesis Supplement to our archdiocesan newspaper. In this special feature, you'll find encouraging accounts of how Catholics in central and southern Indiana are sharing the faith effectively and joyfully.

Please keep the ministries of evangelization and catechesis in your prayers. Please be supportive of your parish leaders in these areas of Church activity—even to the point of answering God's call, if you hear it, to serve as a catechist or evangelization team member. By God's grace and mercy, may we all hand on what we receive from the Lord—because Jesus says so!

(Ken Ogorek is the catechetical director within the archdiocesan Secretariat for Worship and Evangelization. He can be reached at kogorek@archindy.org.) †



Catholic priests from the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis join African American clergy on June 2, to march and pray at the site where George Floyd was pinned down on May 25 and died at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer. Pictured are Father Joe Gillespie, left, Father Doug Ebert, Father Kevin Finnegan, Father Brian Park and Father Peter Williams. (CNS photo/Dave Hrbacek, *The Catholic Spirit*)

THE EVIL OF RACISM IS ROOTED IN THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

By Sean Gallagher

The Church's long tradition of moral teaching has recognized for more than 1,500 years fundamental sins that are traditionally called the seven “deadly” or “capital” sins.

They are the sins of pride, avarice, envy, wrath (or anger), lust, gluttony and sloth (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1866). Catholic moral teachers over the centuries have seen these sins as lying at the root of more particular sins.

One such particular sin that has caught the attention of society in the U.S. in recent months is racism. How might it be rooted in one or more of the seven deadly sins? And how could virtues that correspond to these sins help promote racial harmony?

The Criterion spoke with three people to explore these questions, and how they can help Catholics address and fight the sin of racism in themselves and in the broader society.

Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers, who is Black, was ordained a permanent deacon for the Archdiocese of

Portland, Ore., in 2002 and is a nationally-known Catholic speaker and writer.

Father Anthony Hollowell, pastor of St. Mark Parish in Perry County and St. Paul Parish in Tell City, earned a doctorate in moral theology from the Alphonsianum Academy in Rome.

Ken Ogorek is the archdiocese's catechetical director and has been a leading voice in catechesis in the U.S. for many years.

Pride and humility

The deadly sin of pride happens when people have an inordinately high opinion of themselves.

Ogorek sees a close connection between this sin and racism.

“In the same way that pride can lead an individual to feel superior in an inappropriate way, I would say, by extension, a person might feel her or his race is better than another race,” he said. “So, there's a sinful kind of pride a person can take in her or his race at the expense of other races.”

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NEW DIRECTORY SHOWS CONNECTION OF EVANGELIZATION AND CATECHESIS

By Natalie Hoefler

Much has changed since the Vatican last produced a new version of its *Directory for Catechesis* in 1997, an update of the original 1971 version.

The “World Wide Web” was just coming into more common use. “Hotmail” was only one year old, and sites like Google, Facebook and YouTube were yet to be created.

But technology is not the only way in which the world has changed.

“My sense is that after more than 20 years since the previous directory, it's become even more apparent how desperate the world is for a basic proclamation of the Gospel,” says Ken Ogorek, director of the archdiocesan Office of Catechesis.

So when the Vatican released a new *Directory for Catechesis* in June, he was quick to promote it to catechists in the archdiocese.

“It's a great opportunity for disciples of Jesus to be reinvigorated in seeing the value of and need for effective evangelization and catechesis,” says Ogorek.

Where two ministries intersect

While evangelization—the spreading of the good news of the Gospel—is distinct from catechesis—the teaching of the faith—the two are intricately linked, and the new directory recognizes that fact, he says.

“The importance of these two ministries unfold in relation with each other,” says Ogorek. “This directory really helps define these ministries—evangelization and catechesis—and helps in understanding how they operate in relation to each other.”

For instance, he notes, catechists have observed through the years that “sometimes they feel like they're trying to teach the faith to people who haven't really been evangelized.

“So there can be a sense of frustration when you're trying to convince someone of the value or significance of a teaching. Without that strong sense of a personal relationship with Jesus, sometimes a participant won't see the point in it all.”

The new directory emphasizes the need for catechists to teach the faith in a way that is similar to evangelization,

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'Cold Brews' AND YouTube VIEWS COMBINE TO HELP BRING PEOPLE CLOSER TO GOD

By John Shaughnessy

When Sean Hussey started his podcast "Cold Brews and Catholic Truths" six months ago, he began to understand firsthand how different forms of social media could touch the lives of people in matters of faith.

After seeing one of Hussey's online presentations, a man contacted him, sharing the impact the podcast had made.

"He was doubting the Catholic Church and considering leaving," recalls Hussey, coordinator of evangelization and discipleship for the archdiocese. "YouTube suggested one of my videos to him, and it totally made sense to him and just re-convicted him in his faith."

Father Jonathan Meyer has received similar feedback after he and his staff ramped up the social media outreach of All Saints Parish in Dearborn County in March when the coronavirus pandemic led to the suspension of the public celebration of Masses across the country.

The parish's YouTube presence now offers daily Masses, daily holy hours, motivational videos and youth programming—leading its number of subscribers to grow from 14,000 to more than 26,600 in the past six months, and reaching an audience that includes at least one follower from Turkey.

"We wanted to help people keep their faith alive while our churches were closed," Father Meyer says. "People responded so well, and we wanted to continue it."

"I can preach the Gospel to the people in my pews. By turning a camera on, I can preach the Gospel not just to those who are within the four walls of the church, but the internet makes it accessible to all nations. It allows the preaching, the teaching and the authentic worship to nourish, inspire and invite those who are not within the four walls."

Hussey and Father Meyer know the power and the potential that different forms of social media—YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, blogs, podcasts—have in terms of sharing the faith, introducing people to the Catholic Church and helping them deepen their relationship with God.

They know the commitment it takes for parishes to create outreach that connects with people.

They also share a major caveat about the use of social media.

'Cold Brews and Catholic Truths'

Hussey's idea for his podcast "Cold Brews and Catholic Truths" came from three joys of his life: beer, coffee and especially his Catholic faith.

"The whole concept of the title is that I could sit down with you, no matter what you believe, and have a conversation about the Catholic faith over a beer or coffee, these are some of the things I'd want to share with you. And I'd do it in a way that's reverent and charitable toward you."

"I do my own talks on there and invite different guests. I think the world view that Catholicism puts forth is something that any person can see the clarity and the consistency of. The podcast is about spreading and defending the Catholic faith. I want to give other Catholics the confidence to do it as well."

As coordinator of evangelization and discipleship for the archdiocese, Hussey wants to help parish leaders develop more effective ways—including the use of social media—to connect with people who are both inside and outside the Catholic faith.

"We do want our parishes to have some kind of presence with the new media, or at the very least with their website. That can be an opportunity to connect with people on the outside. We want to orient what we do toward the outside, not just those who are already committed. If someone stumbled upon a website, whether they're Catholic or not, would it be for them? Would the new person be able to navigate their way?"

Hussey views social media as an avenue "where we can bring the message of Jesus Christ in different ways," especially to young people who are so connected to technology.

"It's a place where we can be a little more intentional as Christians. We can do it in small ways if we are already using social media in our life. How can we find opportunities to share out stories, share ways in which Christ has impacted our lives? If people come across something that's intriguing, if they're captivated by beauty or a story, that could be a starting point for folks to consider a little more their faith."



Sean Hussey, coordinator of evangelization and discipleship for the archdiocese, shares his love of his faith on his podcast, "Cold Brews and Catholic Truths." (Submitted photo)

'I wanted to get back to God'

Father Meyer began his focus on social media in 2009, posting "positive, encouraging" messages on Facebook. At All Saints Parish, he leads a digital outreach that also now includes Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.

"That's where people are spending their time," Father Meyer says. "The goal of evangelization is to preach the Gospel to all nations. Our goal is to put content out there that would have people encounter the Lord."

The parish's content on YouTube has made a dramatic impact on the faith of Barbara Jean Del Pino, a resident of Miami, Fla.

"I had really lost my way, but with everything that happened with the pandemic, a lot of us were thinking about the things we haven't done, things that made us reflect on our lives," she says. "I wanted to get back to God. I wanted to get back to church. I was going through YouTube, and I found one of Father Meyer's homilies. I loved his homilies, and I started watching more and more. Thanks to Father Meyer, I'm so much closer to God and my faith."

Richard Cowart follows Father Meyer as he drives farm equipment near his home in Durham, N.C.

"I'm not even Catholic," Cowart says, adding that Father Meyer's homilies have increased his desire to enter the Church.

"When you go out on the Web, you reach far more than a 10-mile radius, far more than the people who are comfortable with you," Father Meyer says. "Our goal is to look at where people are broken, hurt and in need. You get some haters, but you also get people who are genuinely looking for Christ."

He's so committed to the social media approach that All Saints recently created a new position at the parish—coordinator of electronic evangelization.

"If you're going to do this, you have to have skilled people to do it," he says. "If we're going to bring Christ to them, it needs to be done well."

'It's all about making disciples'

As effective as social media can be in leading people to God and the Catholic faith, Father Meyer and Hussey both believe that outreach approach should never end there.

In making that point, Hussey refers to a comment made by Father Michael ("Mike") Schmitz, a priest in the Diocese of Duluth, Minn., who has a large following online.

"I think there are some really cool things that the new media can do," Hussey says. "But I would say—and this is actually something I've heard Father Mike Schmitz say—we should not really be considering evangelizing through the new media if we're not first willing to evangelize in our everyday life."

"If we're not willing to talk to the people around us about our faith when those opportunities present themselves, we probably shouldn't be sharing about it in this public platform."

The true power of the use of social media comes in the sharing, Hussey says. "They might share my podcast, or they

might share a Father Mike Schmitz video or a Bishop Robert Baron video with somebody. That's going to hold a lot more weight because they have a relationship with that person. They have an opportunity to talk to them more about it."

Father Meyer encourages his All Saints parishioners and his online followers to do the same—to meet people where they are, to share their faith personally at every turn.

"It's all about making disciples," the priest says. "A disciple is one who knows the Lord. They know him intimately. It's my hope and my goal that they're going to go out and make disciples of Christ."

(To listen to Sean Hussey's podcasts, visit www.seanhussey.org.

Father Jonathan Meyer can be followed on these social media outlets:

YouTube: All Saints Parish-We Are One

Instagram: @allsaintsparishin

@word.up8

Twitter: @AllParish

Facebook: @allsaintsparish1 †

PODCASTS WORTH CHECKING OUT

As the coordinator of evangelization and discipleship for the archdiocese, Sean Hussey knows the power and the potential of social media to help move people closer to God and their Catholic faith. Here are five of his favorite podcasts/YouTube channels that he recommends:

- Ask Fr. Josh (podcast)
- The Counsel of Trent (podcast)
- Pints with Aquinas (podcast and YouTube Channel)
- Fr. Michael (Mike) Schmitz on Ascension Presents (YouTube Channel)
- The Catholic Talk Show (podcast and YouTube Channel)

INDIANAPOLIS PARISH FORMS MISSIONARY DISCIPLES TO SPREAD THE FAITH

By Sean Gallagher

Downtown Indianapolis is a mission field for the Church with thousands of young adults moving there in recent years.

St. John the Evangelist Parish, in the heart of downtown Indianapolis, is forming missionary disciples to reach out in faith to these young adults—and anyone else its diverse members come into contact with in their daily lives.

The parish isn't utilizing a new, cutting-edge evangelization program in its efforts. It seeks instead to follow the example of Christ himself, who invested a lot of time with just 12 disciples. They, in turn, later traveled far and wide, seeking to make disciples of all nations.

Parishioners are invited to attend a five-part workshop on missionary discipleship. They can then enter into one-on-one discipleship relationships for just men or just women in which they enter more deeply into their faith and discover how it relates to their daily lives. They are mentored in this by a fellow parishioner who has received training and has been living the faith intentionally for a long period.

There are other discipleship relationships set up by the parish for couples and people recently received into the full communion of the Church.

The hope of Brian Bibb and Jessica Inabnitt, directors of mission and discipleship for St. John, is to see a growth in discipleship among parishioners, and eventually those outside the faith community, to happen on its own in a process described as "spiritual multiplication."

"The whole goal is to build a culture of evangelization," said Bibb. "Hopefully, down the road, this will happen organically where people will have others that they'll want to reach out to and start to disciple."

'The discipleship program inspired me'

It's starting to happen. In the four years that discipleship relationships have been facilitated in the parish, there have been 91 relationships for men, women and couples. From these, 36 people went on to help others become disciples, and 27 individuals and seven couples are currently in relationships with people just entering into discipleship.

Carmie Klein, 63, is a member of St. John who has had faith at the heart of her life for a long time. A retired interior designer, she has helped form six missionary disciples in the parish.

The most recent one was Amanda DeRoche, 31, a young adult who moved to work and live in downtown Indianapolis eight years ago.

Their discipleship relationship began in March at the start of the quarantine related to the coronavirus pandemic.

That didn't stop Klein and DeRoche, though. They simply had video chats online during a two-month period.

"She was always good about taking what I was hearing in prayer during that time and applying it to discipleship and to evangelization," DeRoche said.

Now back at work in a high-rise building in downtown Indianapolis, DeRoche is more intentional about sharing her faith with others, joining with Catholics and other Christians in her workplace to pray.

For her, St. John's approach to equipping its members to evangelize out in the world was critical to this change in her life.

"It's incredible being a part of this community, with the vibrancy and the youth of it," DeRoche said. "The discipleship program inspired me to be more intentional in my faith, especially at work right now. I'm realizing that there's a need to witness there in our challenging times."

Klein recognizes the importance of the one-on-one discipleship



Carmie Klein, left, and Amanda DeRoche, both members of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis, pose on Aug. 24 outside the parish church. Klein helped form DeRoche as a missionary disciple through video chats they had online earlier this year during the coronavirus quarantine. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

relationships fostered by St. John.

"I like to look at us in these discipling relationships as strengthening the ligaments of the body of Christ," she said. "We're just a small part of the body of Christ. But we're making it stronger, person by person, ligament by ligament, so that we can be stronger in our faith and in expressing our faith in love, justice and reverence out in the world. That's what we do."

'Investing deeply in a few ... for the sake of many'

What St. John the Evangelist Parish has done in its urban context is something that Sean Hussey, archdiocesan coordinator of evangelization and discipleship, thinks can happen in parishes in the suburbs, small towns and rural countryside of central and southern Indiana.

For him, forming lay Catholics in parishes to be missionary disciples can happen in one-on-one relationships or in discipleship groups.

"The foundation of this initiative is to equip the laity to be the primary evangelists in the parish," Hussey said. "That is the universal principle. We all have a responsibility to take what we've received and hand it on to somebody else. Discipleship groups are a means to help parishes do this, to train ordinary parishioners to share their faith and multiply that over time."

Klein sees the applicability of the approach in diverse parish contexts.

"The call to holiness has universal significance," she said. "Maybe they look a little different in the lives of each one of us. But it's the particular mission that Christ has called you to at your particular point in your life with these people at this place."

Hussey emphasized that when parishes begin this approach to evangelization, it starts small through personal invitations, training and discipleship relationships or small groups.

"It's not about teaching everybody everything," he said. "It's about investing deeply in a few, ultimately not for the sake of those few, but for the sake of many."

"There's a paradox that when we spend more time with less people, we can actually end up reaching more people rather than by spending more time planning more things and events."

Such discipleship relationships or small groups lead Catholics, Hussey said, to "ordinary evangelization," sharing the Gospel in deliberate ways in everyday life.

'The goal is that the groups multiply'

Training, though, is needed for this process to happen effectively.



Brian Bibb, a director of mission and discipleship at St. John the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis, gives a presentation on Oct. 19, 2019, on the grounds of the downtown Indianapolis faith community, during a missionary discipleship workshop sponsored by the parish. (Submitted photo)

"It's a simple method," Hussey said. "What can I do in my ordinary life to share my faith with somebody else? The reality is that we need to be equipped to do that. We need the skills and confidence to do that."

It's important in training, Hussey said, to form disciples to have an outward focus in living and sharing their faith. This helps discipleship relationships or groups avoid the temptation of becoming just a comfortable place for Catholics to stay.

"The ultimate goal is that the groups multiply, that we raise up new disciples from the initial discipleship groups that are formed," Hussey said. "Over time, we'll have more and more people reached by the Gospel in an intimate, personal way that small groups allow for."

Hussey wants to help archdiocesan parishes equip its members to be missionary disciples across central and southern Indiana.

"We can help them get started with good training," he said. "I'm happy to travel anywhere in the archdiocese to a parish to meet with an initial team or leadership to take them through training and help them train their initial small group leaders."

(For more information about evangelization efforts in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, including on how to form discipleship groups and relationships in parishes, visit evangelizeindy.com.) †



Father Jonathan Meyer, pastor of All Saints Parish in Dearborn County, prepares online content for his parish's electronic evangelization, an outreach that has grown tremendously during the COVID-19 pandemic. (Submitted photo)



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says Ogorek, “always proclaiming and making connections to the basic Gospel message, that basic opportunity for salvation from sin and death but the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus.”

‘Clearly within the realm of evangelization’

The link between catechesis and evangelization is addressed in the first of the three parts in the new directory: “Catechesis in the Church’s Mission of Evangelization.”

On the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ webpage regarding the revised resource, it states that the directory “places catechetical instruction and formation of catechetical teachers clearly within the realm of evangelization.”

At the same time, it relies on solid resources for teaching the faith, such as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Scripture and the writings of recent popes, particularly Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation “*Evangelii Gaudium*” (“The Joy of the Gospel”). The second part of the directory, “The Process of Catechesis,” underscores the various sources from which one can learn about the faith in addition to those listed above, including the family, sacred art, sacred music and more.

This section also notes the need not just to teach the faith, but to accompany those being instructed.

“In his proclamation of the Kingdom, Jesus seeks, encounters, and welcomes people in their concrete life situations,” the directory states.

Some “concrete life situations” specifically addressed include people at various stages of life, those with disabilities, migrants and those in prison.

The third part, “Catechesis in the Particular Churches,” focuses on catechesis in parishes, ecclesiastical movements, Catholic schools and other Church associations.

It also looks at teaching the faith amid “contemporary cultural scenarios,” such as the modern scientific mentality, the digital culture, the work environment and more.

‘Both teacher and witness’

The availability of the new *Directory for Catechesis* doesn’t mean there will be “any dramatic changes

immediately,” says Ogorek. “But I think as catechetical leaders have a chance to digest and start applying what we see in the directory, I’m hoping that we’ll notice a few things.”

For instance, as catechists seek to also evangelize their students, Ogorek sees an opportunity for observing more witnesses of the power of the Gospel message.

“We know a catechist is both teacher and witness, and one of the areas of deeper interest in this document is the element of witnessing,” he says. “There has to be an evangelistic fire in a catechist so participants can grasp how life-changing these teachings are.”

Another change Ogorek foresees in time is more fruit in parish evangelization efforts guided by the archdiocesan Office of Evangelization.

“We will help parishes to be more effective in their efforts to evangelize both within the parish community and the neighborhoods that comprise a parish’s territory,” he says.

Ogorek hopes those fruits will in turn lead to “more parishioners growing and proclaiming their faith to their friends and relatives.”

There are also effects Ogorek hopes to see more “down the block” than “down the road” as catechists begin to implement the ideas, concepts and practices laid out in the new directory.

“One near-term effect, we hope, will be that our parish catechetical leaders will deepen their own knowledge and appreciation of the ministry that they’ve been invited to by God,” he says.

‘Not left groping in the dark’

Parish catechists are not the only ones who can benefit from the new directory.

“We know that catechesis is a part of so much of what the Church does,” Ogorek notes. “So many of her ministries have a catechetical element.”

Consequently, the new resource is also being reviewed by archdiocesan leaders of areas outside the Office of Catechesis. Those leaders are holding discussions “to begin understanding what the directory is saying and its implication for various archdiocesan ministries,” Ogorek explains.

“We’re trying to model at the archdiocesan level what we hope will happen in parishes—that parishes will read the document and help each other apply its principles to their various ministries. I think it’s a sign of our faith that



we don’t do ministry in a vacuum.”

Ogorek is grateful for the new *Directory for Catechesis* and other Vatican-produced resources.

“For a ministry like catechesis, which is so important to the life of a parish, it’s telling that really from the highest levels of the Church we’ve got resources to help us continue learning how to do things better by God’s grace and mercy.

“There’s some assurance in that—we’re not left groping in the dark. We’ve got good resources for learning best how to share the faith.”

(For more information or to order the new *Directory for Catechesis*, go to www.usccb.org/resources/directory-catechesis-new-edition.) †

RACISM

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Pride is traditionally understood to be at the root of the original sin of Adam and Eve, in which they gave in to the temptation of the devil to see themselves as wiser than they truly were, even wiser than God who created them.

Deacon Burke-Sivers spoke about this in seeing a connection between pride and racism.

“To think that your race is superior to another person’s race is clearly



Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers

not the teaching from our Lord or revealed in the Old Testament. It’s prideful,” he said. “To think that your belief is better or more true than anything that God has revealed—that’s definitely pride and arrogance.”

Father Hollowell said there is a prideful attitude in racism which “finds evil outside of ourselves.” But such a view, he said, is “rooted in pride.”

“Pope Francis has a good line,” Father Hollowell noted, “where he says that the line between good and evil does not pass outside of us but inside of us.

“Racism fits hand in glove with the temptation in man to locate the essence of evil outside of him in groups, in persons, in colors.”

Humility, on the other hand, when truly embraced in one’s daily life, can promote racial harmony, Deacon Burke-Sivers said.

This virtue, he noted, is rooted in a “covenant relationship” which involves “a complete gift of yourself to someone else.”

“It’s moving from self-centeredness where I am the center of being and existence,” he said, “and recognizing that Jesus Christ, who is God, is the center of all being and existence.”

Through the virtue of humility, Deacon Burke-Sivers said, racist attitudes can give way and help people “recognize that it’s better to seek what’s good in and for the other person.”

Anger, forgiveness and mercy

Ogorek said that racism can be an expression of an inordinate anger toward a race of people because of an injustice committed by a person of a particular race against an individual from another race or against a friend or relative of that person.

“One thing anger sometimes goads us toward is generalizing,” Ogorek said. “I had a bad experience with a person in a certain demographic, so now I’m going to vilify and demonize that whole group.”

Father Hollowell said that anger misused in this way “makes it very attractive to weak, fallen human beings to believe a lie, and not see a deeper truth that we have responsibility in our own heart for the evil that goes on in the world.”

Deacon Burke-Sivers knows from personal experience that “a wrong kind of anger is deliberately unkind and hurtful. It seeks to harm another person.”

For 18 years, he was estranged from his father who had, among other things, struggled with alcohol abuse. For a long time, Deacon Burke-Sivers refused to speak with his father.

When they finally began to reconcile, however, Deacon Burke-Sivers didn’t demand an apology from his father. He took a different step.

“One of the first things that I did was to ask him to forgive me for hating him for 18 years,” he said.

Similarly, Deacon Burke-Sivers said, people who harbor racist attitudes need “to be a vehicle of mercy” toward those of other races against whom they feel animosity before seeking any forgiveness from those who might have hurt them.

“In the beautiful image of Divine Mercy from St. Faustina, the rays are going outward from the heart of Jesus,” he said. “We have to be vehicles of mercy toward the people who hurt us. It will hopefully open up that person to receive mercy and forgiveness from God.”

Sloth and being uncomfortable

Deacon Burke-Sivers described the deadly sin of sloth as “spiritual laziness.”

Father Hollowell experienced this sin in himself when he had moved to Mississippi from Indiana and realized that “racism was alive and well in the South” after hearing a resident make a very racist remark.

“I just did nothing,” Father Hollowell recalled. “I was like, ‘This is just Mississippi. It’s just the way they talk.’ It was a moment of inaction on my part.”

Sloth, then, in regard to racism, is a sin of omission, the failure to do something good when it was needed.

“When I look back at that situation, I see sloth and inaction,” Father Hollowell said. “I accuse myself of what I didn’t do.”

He didn’t challenge, even in a charitable way, the person who made the racist comment. Such slothful inaction, Father Hollowell said, can



Fr. Anthony Hollowell

be seen in an indifferent attitude of many people in society when racism is seen both in individual actions and in broader social attitudes regarding race.

Deacon Burke-Sivers says that sloth can take

hold in people when “they get very comfortable in their sin.”

“When we get comfortable, we get stuck,” he said. “Look at Jesus on the cross. He was uncomfortable.

“If we want to take our spiritual lives to the next level, we’ve got to get uncomfortable. Have the fortitude to recognize that within yourself and ask God for spiritual courage and strength to pick up your cross and follow Jesus. It will mean working hard to defeat the power of sin in your life.”

No matter what deadly sin might be expressed through racism, Deacon Burke-Sivers said, learning about and reflecting on racism in light of the Church’s teachings and traditions can be helpful because that can lead to conversion.

“In order for things to change, there has to be conversion, a deep acceptance of the spirit of God’s love in our hearts that spurs us on to real change in culture and society,” he said. “It has to start with change in yourself. In order for that kind of change to happen, we have to connect the sins of racism and prejudice with the tenets of our faith.” †