

**NATIONAL LETTER TO POTENTIAL SIGNERS AND ENDORSERS INVITATION
TO SUPPORT PROPOSED REVISIONS TO**

***A Path Toward Justice: A National Prayer Service Honoring the Many Journeys
that Shaped America***

Dear Friend in Christ,

Grace and peace to you.

As our nation prepares to commemorate the 250th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has developed a prayer service entitled *A Path Toward Justice: A National Prayer Service Honoring the Many Journeys that Shaped America*.

The prayer service is a thoughtful and inspiring resource that celebrates the dignity of immigrants and refugees, reflects the Church's commitment to welcoming the stranger, and encourages prayerful reflection on the values that have shaped our nation.

After careful review, a growing coalition of Catholic leaders has developed a proposal intended to strengthen the document by more fully honoring all of the peoples whose journeys have shaped the United States.

Our proposal seeks to affirm and build upon the prayer service's existing strengths while offering several additions that reflect the Church's commitment to truth, justice, healing, reconciliation, and human dignity.

Specifically, we are encouraging: Recognition of Indigenous Peoples

We propose that the prayer service explicitly recognize Indigenous peoples as the first peoples of these lands and acknowledge both the suffering they have endured and the gifts they continue to offer our nation.

This includes recognition of:

- Displacement and forced removal**
- Broken treaties**
- Boarding schools and cultural suppression**

- **Indigenous resilience and faith**
- **Stewardship of creation**
- **Ongoing contributions to American life**

Recognition of African American Contributions

We propose that the prayer service more explicitly recognize the millions of Africans who were forcibly brought to this land through slavery and the generations of African Americans whose labor, faith, perseverance, creativity, leadership, military service, educational achievements, and spiritual witness have profoundly shaped our nation.

Expanded Prayers for Healing and Reconciliation

We propose additional prayers addressing:

- **Slavery**
- **Segregation**
- **Racial violence**
- **Forced displacement**
- **Cultural suppression**
- **Systemic injustice**
- **Reconciliation among peoples**

Honoring All the Journeys That Shaped America

The title of the prayer service invites the Church to honor "the many journeys that shaped America."

We believe those journeys include:

- **Indigenous peoples who first inhabited this land**
- **Those brought here through slavery and their descendants**
- **Immigrants and refugees seeking freedom and opportunity**
- **All who continue the work of justice, healing, and reconciliation**

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

Recent actions of the universal Church provide a powerful context for these recommendations.

In 2022, Pope Francis made a penitential pilgrimage to Canada and asked forgiveness of Indigenous peoples for the suffering inflicted through residential schools and other failures of the Church.

More recently, Pope Leo XIV, in *Magnifica Humanitas*, acknowledged the Church's historical failures regarding slavery and called Catholics throughout the world to engage in truth-telling, remembrance, repentance, reconciliation, and renewed commitment to human dignity.

These actions remind us that remembering history is not about assigning guilt to present generations.

It is about telling the truth.

It is about healing wounds.

It is about building right relationships.

It is about becoming more faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

A POSITIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE PROPOSAL

This effort is not intended as criticism of the USCCB prayer service.

To the contrary, we believe the prayer service is already a strong and valuable resource.

Our goal is to help it more fully embody its own title and purpose by recognizing all of the peoples whose experiences have shaped the American story.

We believe these additions would strengthen the prayer service's witness to the Gospel and offer a more complete vision of justice, dignity, and beloved community.

INVITATION TO ENDORSE

We respectfully invite you to review the attached proposal and consider adding your name as a supporter.

We are especially seeking support from:

- Bishops • Priests • Deacons • Religious women and men**
- Black Catholic leaders • Native Catholic leaders**
- Immigration and refugee ministry leaders**
- Catholic educators • Catholic university faculty and administrators**
- Parish leaders • Social justice organizations**
- Lay faithful committed to the Church's mission of reconciliation**

By joining together across racial, ethnic, cultural, geographic, and ministerial lines, we can offer a constructive and hopeful recommendation that reflects the Church's commitment to truth, justice, dignity, and reconciliation.

Thank you for your prayerful consideration.

May the Holy Spirit guide us as we seek to build a Church and a nation that more fully reflect the Kingdom of God.

In Christ,

**Catholic Leaders Supporting Human Dignity,
Racial Justice, Reconciliation,
and the Common Good**

SIGNATURE PAGE

I support the proposed revisions to *A Path Toward Justice: A National Prayer Service Honoring the Many Journeys that Shaped America*.

Name: _____

Title: _____

Organization/Parish/Institution:

City/State: _____

Email: _____

Phone (optional): _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

ADDITIONAL SIGNATURES

Name: _____

Title: _____

Organization: _____

City/State: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

(Attach additional pages as necessary.)

***Please return to: Fr. Larry Dowling, Archdiocese of Chicago,
ldowling@archchicago.org by 5:00 p.m., Sunday, June 21, 2026***

SUGGESTED NATIONAL DISTRIBUTION LIST

Episcopal Leadership

- **Bishops serving on the Committee on Migration**
- **Bishops serving on the Subcommittee for the Promotion of Racial Justice and Reconciliation**
- **Bishops serving Native American and Black Catholic communities**

National Catholic Organizations

- **National Black Catholic Congress**
- **Black Catholic Theological Symposium**
- **National Association of Black Catholic Administrators**
- **Native American Catholic ministries**
- **Catholic Campaign for Human Development partners**

Religious Communities

- **Jesuits**
- **Franciscans**
- **Dominicans**
- **Divine Word Missionaries**
- **Josephites**
- **Religious women serving Indigenous, immigrant, and African American communities**

Catholic Higher Education

- **Catholic universities**
- **Seminaries**
- **Theology departments**

Parish and Ministry Networks

- **Immigration ministries**
 - **Social justice ministries**
 - **Racial justice committees**
 - **Native Catholic ministries**
 - **Black Catholic ministries**
 - **Young adult ministry networks**
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CONCLUSION

The Church's role in moments of national remembrance is not merely to celebrate history.

Our calling is to remember truthfully.

To pray honestly.

To seek healing courageously.

To reconcile faithfully.

And to proclaim hope.

These proposed revisions are offered in that spirit.