

FIG Complex

Have you noticed that there is an unwritten “Don’t Talk about Race” rule in our society? According to Fr. Boniface Hardin, OSB, our anxiety stems from three areas: Fear, Ignorance, Guilt (the FIG Complex).

- **Fear** when speaking about race or racism/discrimination
- **Ignorance** that I have when speaking about race or racism/discrimination
- **Guilt** when talking about race or racism/discrimination

“How do we as leaders in the Church break the “Don’t Talk” rule and transform the proverbial elephant in the room into a house pet? We begin by developing the cultural competence to find our voice...” (BICM 24).

“Do Talk” rule

- We must talk about race
- We ought to express our feelings about race
- We should trust our own efforts to express the reality of racism to guide our journey

Racism

“Racism is a social dysfunction characterized by an inability to see others as brothers and sisters, members of the same human family, because of the color of their skin or some other physical characteristic (BICM 43).

Catholic Social Teaching

Solidarity

“Solidarity highlights in a particular way the intrinsic social nature of the human person, the equality of all in dignity and rights and the common path of individuals and peoples towards an ever more committed unity” (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church. USCCB Publishing: Washington DC, 2007, 192).

“The term ‘solidarity’ widely used by the magisterium, expresses in summary fashion the need to recognize in the composite ties that unite men and social groups among themselves, the space given to human freedom for common growth in which all share and in which they participate. The commitment to this goal is translated into the positive contribution of seeing that nothing is lacking in the common cause and also of seeking points of possible agreement where attitudes of separation and fragmentation prevail” (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church. USCCB Publishing: Washington DC, 2007, 194).

Subsidiarity

“Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do. For every social activity ought of its very nature to furnish help to the members of the body social, and never destroy and absorb them” (Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), 203).

Healing: The remedy to racism is about social healing: a true conversion of heart. Together let us sow the seeds of solidarity based on the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Transforming the FIG into TEAM

Let's start the conversation about race! It can be difficult to be honest with yourself and others as we explore this deeply emotional topic. Remember the principles of respectful listening and the invitation process.

Individually write down your answers to the questions below and then share them in your small group. Afterwards, a member of each group will be invited to share with the larger group.

1. What is your earliest memory of being aware of your "race/culture" or that of others? Was it a positive or negative experience?

2. How do you identify your race/culture? How do you celebrate your God-given racial and cultural heritage?

3. Has there ever been a situation where you have felt unsafe or uncomfortable because of your race or that of others? What was that like?

4. When was your last *positive* experience or discussion about race/culture?

Together we will transform FIG...

Fear > **Trust**

Ignorance > **Experience**

Guilt > **Acceptance and Mercy**