

In the Image and Likeness of God

Protests are happening in our country. Do we discuss the protests with our children? A man died while in police custody. Do we discuss his death with our children?

Racism and race in America are topics that we need to discuss with our children. And it is a topic that we need to address by teaching them what our Church teaches about all of us: that we are made in the image and likeness of God.

What does that mean? It means that people of every race deserve dignity and rights. It means that we must teach our children to treat every person with respect. It means that all people deserve protection and honor. It means that we must revere each other.

Parents have a responsibility to teach their children that they are to “love one another”. This is not an easy lesson, but one they must learn. We teach this with what children see in our actions, the example of how we live our lives. We also teach them directly through conversation, the experiences that we provide our children, and in the books and art we share with our children.

When having a conversation about race, we need to start with our Church’s teaching that we are all created in the image and likeness of God. In his letter to the Galatians, Saint Paul wrote that “through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus (3:26-28).” We need to explain to our children that we must treat everyone with respect, that all people have something to share with us and that the Golden Rule is a way to live our lives. The color of our skin does not provide us with privilege, and it should not cause us to believe that we are less than another.

Stories about children from different places and books with pictures and illustrations of children that represent



the children of the world introduce children to the idea that all of us share the same feelings, all of us need love and all of us have gifts to share. Books can help explain difficult topics to children and it can help them to find the language they need to express their own feelings. In addition, reading about people of different backgrounds and color who have led virtuous lives provides all children with the idea that

anyone can do good things, anyone can succeed. This is important for all of us to recognize and learn.

Art can provide another venue for learning how people are different and alike and those differences and similarities are to be celebrated as gifts from God. Art allows for creative expression and studying art from different places by different artists can often lead to children who are more accepting of differences.

Finally, experiences matter. Who children meet and interact with matters. Parents should seek children from a variety of backgrounds for their children to play with and interact with, so that they will know that all people are important, all are welcomed into their world and all can be friends. When children know people of different colors from an early age, their outlook will be different, and they will probably have more positive feelings about people who look different than they do.

Providing access to art and books that are inclusive, providing children with a variety of experiences that include people of all colors, providing children with the opportunity to meet people who do not look like them will help us to build a more loving world. Talking with our children about what it means to be respectful of others, to show people love on a regular basis will make a big difference to our children and to those they will meet. Our faith asks a lot of parents, but we believe that with the support of those around them, our parents are up to the challenge.

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