



The Aquinas Center's Commitment to Address Racism in our Organization

The recent killings of Black people and the resultant protests, along with the consistent profiling of Black and Brown people, give us pause to reflect on how the Aquinas Center is called as a Catholic institution to confront our own complicity with racism, "America's original sin." For our organization, such complicity is not overt. Yet, in its 33 years of existence, The Aquinas Center has indeed been complicit in the following ways:

- We have failed to incorporate more cultural and ethnic perspectives in our programming.
- We have cooperated in erasing the voices of Black and Brown people from the theology and history of the church.
- We have been comfortable with a predominantly white board and staff, failing to reflect the rich diversity of the Atlanta Archdiocese.
- We have failed to be conscious of the racial makeup of our audiences and, consequently, to incorporate perspectives that would draw a more diverse audience.

As the U.S. Bishops wrote in 1979, "Racism is not merely one sin among many; it is a radical evil that divides the human family and denies the new creation of a redeemed world." For our cooperation in this radical evil—our country's original sin of racism—we are truly sorry.

Examining our mission and practices as an organization mandated to advancing a scholarly, ecumenical exploration of the living Catholic tradition, we commit:

- We will continue to invite Black and Brown Catholic speakers and plan events that highlight and affirm Catholic experiences of people of color.
- We will work more closely and intentionally with Atlanta-area parishes and communities that serve Black and other culturally marginalized Catholics.
- We will continue diversifying our Board of Directors so that those who guide our work and hold us accountable to the Gospel and our mission more closely reflect the reality of the Catholic Church in Atlanta.
- We will implement metrics to ensure strong and consistent representation of people of color among our invited speakers, our board members, and participants in our events and we will develop systems of accountability to assure that we meet our goals.

Pope Francis states: "My friends, we cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in any form and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life" (June 3, 2020). Continuing to address issues of inclusion, co-responsibility, and lay leadership in our church and society, the Aquinas Center remains dedicated to offering anti-racist educational programming that reflects the rich diversity of our theological community.

We ask that you hold us accountable to these commitments.