

origins

CNS documentary service

Racism and the Work of Conversion

Archbishop Hebda

As jury selection began for the trial of former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, who has been charged with murder in last year's death of George Floyd, Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda of St. Paul and Minneapolis called on everyone to explore their own "blind spots," even if they believe themselves to be "free from the sin of racism." In a column titled "Racism and the work of conversion" in the March 11 issue of his archdiocesan newspaper, The Catholic Spirit, the archbishop credited his parents for giving him a "firm foundation" against racial prejudice. But, he added, "I'm painfully aware that all of us have blind spots when it comes to prejudice — racial or otherwise." He said Lent offers the strength and grace to help "work for a

"As the cries for justice grow louder, I've taken up again an examination of conscience."

true transformation of the human heart." He added: "As we pray for our community during this challenging time, let's be sure to pray as well for each other, that we might deepen our commitment to conversion, accept each other as true brothers and sisters, and never lose hope." Archbishop Hebda's column follows.

my mother was determined that I would not grow up to be a racist. Given that I was born in 1950s Pittsburgh, that was a rather remarkable goal. Life along the three rivers was characterized by a marked de facto segregation, and there seemed to have been a high tolerance for racial slurs and humor, but that was never the case in our home.

I knew from experience that my tongue and tonsils would have a memorable encounter with a bar of Dial soap if I even thought of repeating at home the jokes that I heard in school.

In the aftermath of the riots that gripped Pittsburgh in the late 1960s, my mother would take me with her door to door as she solicited pledges for the bishop's annual appeal. She considered it a great blessing when she would be spat upon or the door slammed in her face as fellow parishioners registered their opposition to the then-bishop's message of racial reconciliation and the diocese's financial support for programming benefiting the African American community.

continued on page 742



contents

- 741 Racism and the Work of Conversion
by Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda
- 743 Palm Sunday Mass Homily
by Pope Francis
- 744 *Candor Lucis Aeternae*:
Apostolic Letter on
Seventh Centenary of
Death of Dante
by Pope Francis
- 752 Letter to Diocese on the
Pandemic
*by Bishop Edward C.
Malesic*
- 753 Chrism Mass Homily
*by Cardinal Vincent
Nichols*
- 754 Speech at Inauguration of
Vatican City State Judicial
Year
by Pope Francis
- 756 Datebook
- 756 On File

April 8, 2021
Volume 50
Number 45