

Session 2: Institutional Histories

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What are the Challenges and Potential for Moving Institutions to Address the Greatest Threats of Today, including the devastating realities of racism.

Our opening session celebrated the connection with the foundresses of the OSP and IHMs, as we looked imaginatively back toward Theresa Maxis and Mother Mary Lange and they looked imaginatively forward from their experiences in the 19th century to ours in the 21st. We are like that sankofa bird looking back into the past to see what might be retrieved as we move forward into our future; and in these sessions we're asking how do we allow our past to illuminate our present and inspire our future.

And we're also doing this rooted in the spirit of the Catholic Church at Vatican II that recommends that we read the signs of the times and understand them in light of the gospel. This recognition – that we don't just move forward without a clear sight of both past and present is key to the opportunity of our gathering together. To sharpen our view of the past so as to orient us toward recognizing the most pressingly the signs of *our* times to be read in light of the gospel. We're committing ourselves in a particular way to read the signs of *our* times as a nation crying out – again – for racial justice. What might Theresa and Mary have to offer with a long view of history to help us read the signs of our times and orient ourselves to our future.

The task before us in this session is to situate Mary and Theresa, and ourselves as well, in the broader history of America's racial projects. As you'll remember, the idea of a racial project is that 'race' is not something that drops from the sky or is embedded in us biologically, but is a set of socially constructed categories by which the human family has been sorted, and according to which material, social and economic benefits have either been granted or withheld. It is with the framing of 'racial projects' that we'll revisit US history and Mary and Theresa within it in

order to try to understand how the place we stand today is within our inheritance as a nation. We might understand our current realities better and take our future steps more confidently if we can understand the racial project out of which our moment has been made. What we'll also see is the way in which Theresa and Mary were situated as members within the Church, and that the Christian tradition and the Catholic Church has played a crucial role in America's racial project.

Chapters 1&2: Coloniality, Christendom, Invasion and Enslavement (2-6)

Our story of Catholicism in the United States, begins in Europe, with the era of colonial expansion and the thought-experiments of the European Enlightenment. Christians of the early modern period read each so-called discovery of new lands as evidence of God's favor upon them. In the words of Pope Alexander VI's *Inter Caetera*, the exploration of Columbus, propelled "the spread of the Christian rule" with a "holy and praiseworthy purpose so pleasing to immortal God."¹ Discovery and expansion was "to the happiness and glory of all Christendom." SLIDE For many of the earliest Christian colonists, the biblical text foretold this expansion with the Genesis directive: "be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. SLIDE 1649 Puritan Governor John Winthrop of the Massachusetts colony saw that God had given the land "to sonnes of men, with a general condition: increase and multiply, replenish the earth and subdue it." SLIDE While this meant that colonists were fulfilling God's plan in settling and claiming the land for "Christendom" the mentality of "coloniality" not only saw the lands destined for European rule, but also assessed the indigenous peoples as not fulfilling the command to 'subdue

¹ Las Casas 1540s, Jamestown slave laws 1682: Virginia laws enacted Act I. It is enacted that all servants. . . which [sic] shall be imported into this country either by sea or by land, whether Negroes, Moors [Muslim North Africans], mulattoes or Indians who and whose parentage and native countries are not Christian at the time of their first purchase by some Christian. . . and all Indians, which shall be sold by our neighborign Indians, or any other trafficking with us for slaves, are hereby adjudged, deemed and taken to be slaves to all intents and purposes any law, usage, or custom to the contrary notwithstanding. Linneaus 1750.

the earth' with their semi-nomadic lifestyles; there were seen through the Christian lens as only fulfilling God's plan insofar as they converted to Christianity.

While early Catholic colonists, like Bartolome de las Casas, saw indigenous peoples as "humble, patient and peaceable...open to doctrine and very apt to receive the holy Catholic faith,"² other colonists named them variously and so began the construction of the whole 'race' of indigenous peoples: they were named as trading partners, guides, Indians, natives but also savages, barbarians and pagans. It is only after indigenous peoples refuse Christian missionary advancement that they begin to be categorized as 'red', the crimson paint of their religious practices turning their skin permanently red in the eyes of White Christians, who now regularly named them as a different race, a pagan race of 'savages.'³

The Jesuits were among the first Catholics to encounter indigenous peoples in their missions with New Spain, in Canada and finally in the colony of Maryland. Indigenous peoples were still part of the landscape, when the first Bishop of Baltimore, John Carroll, remarked that converting them to Christianity would make them more friendly to American interests. This map reminds us of the great variety of indigenous communities on whose land the American Catholic Church was built.

While the area at White Marsh was at some point transferred from Indigenous Nations to the hands of Bishop John Carroll's ancestor James Carroll, in order for the Carroll family to work the land these early Catholic colonists used the hands of enslaved laborers to "subdue the earth" in the European agricultural model. We might imagine the future foundation of the church laid by the hands of those named in Carroll's papers: Jack, Harry, Peter, Mary, Mayra, Betty, Davy,

² Bartolome de Las Casas, *Devastation of the Indies*

³ The racialization of native Americans as a religious project of Christian mission is outlined in Daniel Murphree, "Race and Religion on the Periphery: Disappointment and Missionization in the Spanish Floridas, 1566-1765" in *Race, Nation and Religion in America*, ed. Henry Goldschmidt and Elizabeth McAlister (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 35-60.

Jenny, Dolly, Toby, Adam, Pedro, Page, Judith and countless more.⁴ Carroll bequeathed not only the land they had worked but also the enslaved workers to the Jesuits; land upon which the “Corporation of Roman Catholic Clergymen”⁵ (the earliest form of the diocese of Baltimore) took shape. It is perhaps not surprising, but worth repeating, in the widespread colonizing effort of the Catholic Church in the Americas, the Catholic Church was, in the words of historian Shannen Dee Williams, the first and largest corporate slaveholder in the Americas.

If we begin in this earliest era of the Catholic Church in America, we are already situated in a *religio*-racial project that diverts the resources of land ownership and wealth building from the hands of indigenous people and peoples of African descent, and into the hands of White land owners, White Churchmen, and others who had been categorized as ‘White’ when naturalization legislation that demarcated citizens with the category of “Free White Persons” (1790).

As the nation settled, so too did the Church settle into the institutions of the nation, benefitting from the systems put in place for land ownership, the systems of wealth building, the system of citizenship and of city planning. It is with this early map of Baltimore that we might begin to situate our foundresses within the institutional history of church and nation.

Recognizing that as Free Women of Color, they lived within systems built not to serve them but to serve White citizens instead. SLIDE Established in 1782, it took Baltimore just forty years to establish a system of public schools, a service alongside those of housing, health and public works. But, this public school system was denied to children of color, even those whose free parents contributed through the payment of taxes. And in 1832 when the cholera epidemic hit the city, access to clean streets, clean water, adequate housing, healthcare and hospitals was directed at Baltimore’s white citizens. This was just a year after the enslaved uprising inspired

⁴ James Carroll 1512 letter in Georgetown Slavery Archives.

⁵ Edward Beckett, “Listening to Our History: Inculturation and Jesuit Slaveholding” (November 1996)

by Nat Turner took place in Virginia, and Baltimore had put in place repressive laws to limit the movement even of free people of color: African Americans could no longer hold religious meetings without a White minister present – even the institution of the Church was caught in a racial project of White dominance (White supremacy?)

With this institutional background, we might meet again Mary and Theresa. Their connections with the Catholic Church as an institution in Baltimore provides some access to...but their status as “Free Women of Color” reveals the complexity of the Racial Project:

Socio-Political Categorization: Provides Access

- “citizenship”
- “freedom”
- “rights”
- “payment for labor”
- **Institutionalized Racism: Denies Access**
 - Education
 - Healthcare
 - Segregated Churches and Congregations
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Scholarship is only now catching up to provide us with a fuller picture of the life-experience of Free Women of Color, but images from the time gives us tools for our imagination. Like this image (1845) of the members of Bethel AME church in Baltimore (under the leadership of Rev. Darius Stokes), extending publicly their gratitude for the collaboration with White citizens (partnering with Rev. R. T. Brekenridge) and “his work to prevent legislation that would place restrictions on slaveholders’ ability to manumit slaves and the rights of the state’s free black population.”⁶ The little we are told by the caption on this image might reveal a lot: the AME in the Black Church tradition was established by Black Americans precisely to counter the White dominance and oppression of fellow-Christians as an institution apart from White control.

⁶ <https://www.mdhistory.org/the-rise-of-the-african-methodist-episcopal-church-in-baltimore-and-the-bethel-a-m-e-church/>

Women and men of color made their way together, joining resources to provide where White national institutions and systems did not. The image recommends that we experience the spirituality of the Black Church in Baltimore as simultaneously a political arena, where people came together with the people-power that might enact systemic change.⁷ Was the chapel housed in the convent of the OSPs and used by Baltimore's Black Catholics (1836) structured by a similar orientation and practice?⁸

SLIDE While sketched from a scene 15 years after the founding of the OSPs it might capture our imagination to envision what it means that Mother Mary Lange was a woman of some means; and to be reminded that despite a nation whose systems were designed with White well-being in view, the creativity and collaboration of people of color could not be extinguished. Celebrating Mary and Theresa in this era of Baltimore in our nations and our Church's history gives us something to celebrate and bring forward into our future. But, it is simultaneously a celebration and a sadness, because when the Oblate Sisters of Providence are ministering the African Americans in Baltimore, it is because the US systems had failed them. We might simultaneously celebrate the work of health-giving and education that the Sisters provided AND lament that these services and their works of mercy and mission were necessary.

Chapter 3: Colorism and the Era of Expansion (7-14)

From out of the founding eras of encounter with indigenous peoples and an entanglement in an economy of enslavement, the story of US institutions and the Church within them moves next to what I name as the 'era of expansion', and with Theresa and Mary we can further trace the racial project in this era. You'll note on this map, the vast extension of the Diocese of Baltimore, in that it includes the land that is becoming the Indiana Territory SLIDE and then the

⁷ <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/african-american-odyssey/free-blacks-in-the-antebellum-period.html>

⁸ <https://oblatesisters.com/history>

Michigan Territory SLIDE. We're reminded of the enduring impact of the Genesis 1:28 when legislators even of the early 19th century still reason that God destined this land for Europeans to settle and saw indigenous nations as failing in the God-ordained tasks, as the words of future President John Quincy Adams reveals when he reasoned: "What is the right of the huntsman to the forest of a thousand miles over which he has accidentally ranged in quest of prey? Shall the fields and vallies, which a beneficent God has formed to teem with the life of innumerable multitudes, be condemned to everlasting barrenness?" And the politicians who oversaw the land that will be home to Monroe Michigan similarly reasoned with the biblical text for coloniality and US Christian expansion: "Is one of the fairest portions of the globe to remain in a state of nature, the haunt of a few wretched savages, when it seems destined by the Creator to give support to a large population and to be the seat of civilization, of science and of true religion?" *Governor William Henry Harrison, of Indiana (1810)* This logic was written into the nation's law in 1823 when indigenous nations were granted merely the right of occupancy, but this was superseded by any Christian nations' right of discovery. The Supreme Court decision that Indigenous Nations never had a proper right to ownership of the land continues to impact the sovereignty of nations today.

SLIDE MANIFEST DESTINY. The acquisition of land as a way of fulfilling God's purpose in the establishment of so-called "civilization" was further evidence of the distinctive ingenuity of a particular racial group, as Senator Thomas Hart Benton revealed a national ideology, perhaps one that impacted settlers in the Michigan Territory, when he announced: "It would seem that the White race alone received the divine command, to subdue and replenish the earth!"

SLIDE By the time Theresa Maxis would decide to move from Baltimore to the frontier (1845) the indigenous nations had been stripped of all their land except 32 square miles. And, yet, traces of indigenous peoples original relation to the land could not be erased, as these petroglyphs and other archeological remains date back 8,000 years and are still visible today. But, the 1819 “civilization fund” in Congress dedicated resources to bringing indigenous peoples into a more settled, Euro-American way of being, and forms of Christian mission and Christian missionary education were a key feature in that national project. When the Redemptorist Mission to the Winnebago at Sault Ste Marie was established⁹ it was already within the networks previously laid down by the Jesuits, and Catholic missions worked with other White settler colonialists: traders/business/shipping companies, government representatives: military and Indian agents, hotels, log houses, Christian missions and schools. In archival materials the Church’s work in this area reveals something of the way institutions were mutually informing in an overarching national, racial project. Bishop Peter Paul Lefevere complained that “to give the Indians a full classical education [was] doing him more harm than good” while priests of his diocese were being advised to establish schools in their mission so that in their report to the government they could QUOTE “show the visible superiority of Catholicism to get a proper share of the \$7000 guaranteed by the treaty for the instruction of the savages.” (May 26, 1842) END QUOTE. When Lefevere sent gifts to the missions even he named the recipients of these gifts as “savages” The 1850 Michigan constitution declared that “civilized Indians could become citizens by renouncing membership in their tribes.”¹⁰

⁹ Holy Name (Chippewa) – Sault St. Marie – Run by Catholic/Redemptorist / <https://boardingschoolhealing.org/>

¹⁰ Sharon Marie Brunner, “The Aftereffects of the Boarding School Experience for Native Americans in Michigan,” Masters Thesis (2002) Grand Valley State University, page 19. <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1691&context=theses>

Lefevere and the Catholic Church in this broader history reminds us of the multiple ways the Church participated in the era's racial project, not losing sight of the historical backdrop that the expansion to the frontier was still situated within an economy of enslavement, as accounts describe Lefevere as having attended to the mission among the enslaved including the baptism of Peter Paul Tolton, who would become father of Augustine Tolton, America's first African-American Priest.

While this background is essential to know the wider scene in which Theresa was invited, it appears that Theresa she stepped into a different project of the institutional Church, not ministering to enslaved Catholics or indigenous nations, but to the White frontier settlers of Monroe. We might pause to consider two different expressions of the institution of the Catholic Church in two different locations: The Oblate Sisters in Baltimore and the newly founded Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Monroe. These joint portraits revealing another dimension of the Church at work in the racial project of the day, as a letter from Bishop Lefevere (Detroit) to Bishop James Wood (Philadelphia) describes the decisions of a Church accommodating the colorism of the day: "as they were much whiter than any other of the Sisters, Fr. Gillet thought he could avail himself of their services to commence a Convent in Monroe."¹¹ Accommodating to colorism that reveals anti-Blackness, maintaining a mission to the enslaved but not agitating for their freedom, and incorporating indigenous peoples by naming them 'savages' these complex and hurtful realities of our nation's racial project once again give us an opportunity to grieve our past even as we are celebrating it. Knowing what we do about the history of struggle for Black Catholics setting up schools in Baltimore and ministering to the

¹¹ Bishop Lefevere to Bishop Wood, <http://www.sistersofihm.org/what-we-do/publications-library/book-excerpts/detail-paths.html?id=287c7221-114a-4b74-906f-63b18bfe7cc0&pageTitle=IHM%20Book%20Excerpts:%20Theresa%20in%20Monroe:%20Crisis%20of%20Separation>

sick there, we might experience in again a complex way the description of the Monroe Journal (1845) and the institution Theresa would step into:

A singular institution of the Catholic Church experienced in very different ways when embedded in the nation's racial project. What might this history reveal to us about the dynamic of racial justice we continue to struggle with today. Can we hold the stories of our foundresses together, in the hurt and pain of a wider racial project, and nevertheless see them both as expressions to living the shared values of the Catholic tradition? Could *both* be guided by Providence and both live faithfully the value of respect for all persons?

The invitation to wrestle with our complex histories does not end in the parting of these two foundresses (in fact, every era of our histories are complex and fascinating opportunities to understand better the place from which we have come). We might follow both the OSPs and the IHMs as they expand to Philadelphia and wonder whether the fugitive slave law still had an impact on them, being so close to the Mason-Dixon line. But, we also must wrestle with the extended complicity of the Catholic Church of which our congregations are a part, because all the way up to the Civil War our Church defended an economy of enslavement. Not only in the South among slaveholding congregations, but even in the North. Francis Patrick Kenrick, Bishop of Philadelphia (1842-1852) and Archbishop of Baltimore (1852-1863) AND John Hughes, assigned to the Diocese of Philadelphia (1826-1838) Bishop/Archbishop of New York (1838-1864). And their ideas about slavery were disseminated as 'Church teaching' with the symbolic capital assigned to their mobilization of scripture and accommodation to the national system of slavery. Kenrick widely disseminating his ideas through the moral manual *Theologia Moralis* in which seminarians and students across the vast network of Catholic educational institutions might read that "Slaves, informed by Christian

morals, might show service to their masters, venerating always God, the supreme Master of us all; so that in turn the masters might show themselves gentle and even-handed and might lighten the condition of their slaves with humanity and with zeal for their salvation.”¹² And Hughes presented his arguments not only from the pulpit, but also in the press. The extended media production in the Catholic network of the time similarly blessing the accommodation (*Catholic Mirror* April 20, 1861 “Our clergy and press have been true to their mission. Our priests in the North, whatever their private opinions about slavery have not desecrated their pulpits by slavery harangues. Our clergy in the South, who have a true appreciation of the facts, preach to the slaves’ obedience, and to the masters’ clemency.” When we are looking for who is responsible for a given era’s racial project, we need to look carefully at agents in a vast network of systems: media, church, education, legislation and more. But, we also might see the intimate relationships between theological ideas that give an air of divinity to a system’s evils, and the benefits accrued from an evil system. The same Catholic institutions that mobilized the symbolic capital of the Catholic faith to defend an economy of enslavement were enriched by its illicit gains: building funds and tuition payments from slaveholding families as well as the direct profits from unpaid labor over many generations of draining the work from unpaid *Catholic* laborers of African descent. Among the most devastating tropes of this era was that African peoples received benefit from the project of enslavement as it brought them into the project of Christendom and Christian salvation. In my estimation, the Church still has not reckoned with what it means to be an institution built in an economy of enslavement, and with theologian Shawn Copeland we all might adopt that Catholics in the United States “live and work [and worship] in a house haunted

¹² Archbishop Francis Patrick Kenrick, *Theologia Moralis*, cited in Michael Geelan, *Silent Reply: A Selection of Antebellum American Catholic Opinions Dealing with the Issue of Slavery*, MA Thesis, University of Dayton (2007), 31-32.

by the ghost of chattel slavery.”¹³ When the OSPs expanded to serve in New Orleans those ghosts must have been audible, as they entered the geography of bishops who reasoned that “slavery is an eminently Christian work...in which the redemption of millions of human beings who would pass from the darkest intellectual night to the sweet light of the Gospel.”

Chapter 4: Did an Era of Expansion make room for an Era of Inclusion? (14-20)

When the IHMs move to Scranton, they open up my fourth overlapping chapter with an era of expansion. As Historians recount, “In the 1830s, merchant speculators from Philadelphia and New York began mining the Lackawanna Valley for coal; railroads were built...Industrial development...created a demand for cheap labor. At first mainly English and Welsh settlers...then in the 1850s a large number of Irish and Germans came...and in the years following the Civil War thousands of ‘new immigrants’ Southern, Central and Eastern Europeans began settling.” Indeed, these waves of new immigrants at the close of the Civil War era were expressly invited to help build the nation because of its recent expansion. We might just pause to remember the dates here...1845 Theresa moves with the expansion to of US Territory to Monroe, and in 1848 the US military exchange with Mexico has now created a vast expanse of land that needed to be incorporated into the United States, so the ‘new immigrants’ of 1850 in Scranton were part of a wider immigration push at this time. SLIDE

But as the US recruited workers, there were some immigrants to the United States who would not be deemed able to inculturate into the White Christian nation: This image of Monroe in 1866 brings into view another strand of the US racial project as industry paved the way for new immigrants to be recruited from around the globe in this era, and the many Asian nations with which US industrialists sought to lay down technologies that would facilitate exchange (like

¹³ Shawn Copeland, *Knowing Christ Crucified*.

the railroad that would connect with shipping companies) sent their workers at the US request. Popular magazines like Harpers Weekly celebrated the missionary efforts that could be undertaken with this new population, and industrialists governing the railroads drew comparisons between the racial characteristics of Asian workers in relation to white. But, ultimately, the racial project mobilized in response to Asian workers included the reasoning that the immoral “pagan” Chinese were stealing jobs from the “moral” and hardworking Irish. And until the Chinese were Christianized they could not be incorporated into the nation. The 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and the future Asiatic Barred Zone made immigration from Asian nations all but impossible until 1965.¹⁴

While the US was prioritizing citizenship for Free White Persons from European nations (and on religious grounds categorizing Asian persons as ‘non-White), White Christians took on a new task with respect to the people of color who were already part of the body politic. If the guiding trope of the era of encounter was that White Christians were destined to this land, “to subdue the earth”, the trope of the era of expansion was that it was a Christian duty to “uplift and civilize” those caught in America’s territorial grasp; and again the supremacy of White Christian ways of being was the blueprint for this project. At the 1893 World’s Parliament of Religions Rev. Alexander McKenzie celebrated the American Christian moment as a religio-racial project of “taking the black material of humanity and building it up into noble men and women; taking the red material wild with every savage instinct, and making it into respectable men.” SLIDE The Commission of the Catholic Missions Among the Colored People and the Indians may have similarly understood themselves to be participating in such a civilizing mission, SLIDE as The Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions clearly did, disseminating ideas about the failures of

¹⁴ *Senator Aaron Augustus Sargent, “Chinese Immigration Speech, in the Senate of the United States, March 7, 1878.”*

indigenous peoples to transcend their paganism through Catholic media and academic publications. SLIDE The desire to ‘civilize’ and ‘Christianize’ indigenous peoples supported the Catholic participation in the project of forcibly removing Indian children from their homes and educating them in boarding schools.

SLIDE The expansion to the West and refusal of Chinese immigration were backdrops for the most extensive migration between the nation of Mexico and the US. As Juan Gonzalez narrates in his documentary *Harvest of Empire*, the routes of immigration from Latin American countries were laid out first by US imperial interests into those countries: the intertwined economies of the US and Mexico, and the reliance on Mexican farmworkers; the interests of US corporations in sugar production and tropical climates, the military and governmental investments the US made in volatile regions to protect US interests, all begun in the era of expansion and fundamentally transformed the US body politic that rises now to nearly 20% of all US citizens (currently at 18.5%). Mexican-American workers invited into the US economy, Puerto Rican Americans summarily granted US citizenship in 1917, political refugees from places informed by US interests like El Salvador and Cuba, all began the profound transformation of the US racial project in this era of expansion.

The patterns of migration for Latinx Americans coincided with the migration of African Americans fleeing the Jim Crow South for the promised opportunities in the production of cities in the north. But the widespread pattern of Race Massacres – in Omaha and Chicago in 1919, in Tulsa in 1921 – SCRANTON KKK IN 1926 demonstrate the violence that was a key feature of the religious project of this era.

Although violence demonstrates the continued reality of interpersonal racism in our history, when Mexican-Americans and African-Americans arrived in northern cities, they were

met with the invisible form of racism that was built into the system of homeownership. The invisible structures of housing legislation were woven a racial hierarchy that was used to determine which families would have access to government supported loans through the mortgage lending system of the newly established Federal Housing Administration. Developed as legislation to provide social safety nets after the Great Depression, a system of homeownership was developed to enable families to build wealth and security. But, the FHA embedded within its lending practices the racial hierarchy that had been developed by University of Chicago economist Homer Hoyt; and government backed mortgage loans would therefore only help build the wealth and security of those who had been categorized within the races at the top of this list.

Through the website *Mapping Inequality* we have access to the assessor's lens on the racialized value of the cities in our histories, and the interactive maps allow us even to hone in on the blocks on which our churches, motherhouses, schools and hospitals were built. Government professionals described the neighborhoods of our schools and congregations in various ways, but using the exact same form (and formula) across the nation they assessed land values in relation to a racial hierarchy, asked what was the percentage of QUOTE "Negro" population and "foreign-born" families were resident; and what sort of "infiltration" the assessor could see as a threat to the real estate market. For example, we can see the hand of the assessor assigning positive value to the "population of German descent making the B8 section of Philadelphia more desirable", but noting the positively assessed section of A5 where the QUOTE "danger of Jewish encroachment is immanent" The pattern in every one of the thousands of assessors reports was that those neighborhoods graded "D" had a heavy concentration of foreigners, negroes and infiltration. The practice of every one of the real estate maps to color in red those neighborhoods to demarcate

their danger to property values and their hazardous status for real estate lending. In the back rooms of the banking industry and insurance lenders and mortgage distributors, these maps both reflected the era's racial project and contributed to its lasting legacy, as homeownership and property ownership secured in this era is passed down generationally, and is a critical form of wealth-building.

SLIDE In this era's racial project White Catholics also moved through these invisible systems, but began to mobilize against the threat of racial-devaluation of their property. As John McGreevey's study has shown, White parishes across the North organized themselves against the threat of 'infiltration' that would devalue the landscape within their parish boundaries. For example, in this description of White Catholics in Detroit: READ FROM SLIDE.

SLIDE By this time in my story, it is perhaps no surprise that White Christians mobilized their sacred text to give an air of God's good providence on their ventures. As we see in these images captured of White Christians protesting 20th century systems of integration, the scriptural text could yield powerful sentiments, generated not only by outlandish misinterpretation but produced by pastors and preachers who sustained this reading of the sacred text.

Signs like this one help us to see what racial integration is protesting, as it cites Jeremiah 11:3-6. The scriptural text reads:

~~3 You shall say to them, Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel:~~ Cursed be anyone who does not heed the words of this covenant, ~~4 which I commanded your ancestors when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron smelter, saying, Listen to my voice, and do all that I command you.~~ So shall you be my people, and I will be your God, ~~5 that I may perform the oath~~

that I swore to your ancestors, **to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as at this day.**

SLIDE The protester's sign captures perfectly the interpretive extension of God's promise of Christendom: God gave White Christians this land, to subdue, to populate, to uplift and Christianize, and now God promises to protect his investment and to establish the boundaries of that promised land "flowing with milk and honey." White Christians across the nation embraced the promise God had made in ownership of land, ownership of home, education and flourishing; and refused to share this inheritance with Christians of color. SLIDE

But Christians of color also mobilized their faith as Mexican-Americans and Filipino-Americans in movements like the United Farmworkers, and Indigenous nations employed religious symbolisms to struggle for sovereignty in the American Indian Movement. SLIDE The civil rights movement, indeed, was a hermeneutical struggle SLIDE and theologians finally, if belatedly began to reckon with the Whiteness of theological systems.

While the nation engaged in the modern struggle against racism, the Catholic Church we can see aligned too often on the side of the status quo. Or in the words of the Black Catholic Clergy Caucus that met in Detroit in 1968: READ SLIDE WHITE RACIST INSTITUTION

SLIDE Since that time, the Institutional Church has struggled with the heritage as a White-directed institution, and we might read both *Brothers and Sisters to Us* (1979) and *Open Wide Our Hearts* (2018) with the question of whether the documents still betray a White perspective.

We're coming toward the close of my story, but one crucial feature remains that had a different form of lasting impact on our nation. In the same era of the civil right struggle, others were legislating the US racial project in relation to immigration. As then attorney Robert

Kennedy remarked, “ “ So, paths to citizenship were open up for people who would again change the landscape of America’s racial project.

And yet, too many patterns of our past have remained. In a landscape of diversity, white nationalism, anti-immigrant sentiment and violence have continued as threads that threaten persons for whom we are called to care as persons made in the image and likeness of God, and part of the singular history of which we too are a part.

While we’ve arrived at the end of my history, our story continues, because the past is not past, but in each era of America’s racial projects our Catholic tradition was mobilized to direct resources to White persons and divert them from people of color and people of other faiths. The dispossession of indigenous nations, the enslavement of persons of African descent, the denial of the benefits of citizenship to Asian workers, the refusal of well-being and wealth-building in the systems of education and homeownership. What this history leaves us with is not only the interpersonal racism in deep need of repair, but the structural racism reflected in the racial wealth gap. Sociologists and economists can describe this reality as the ‘sedimentation of racial inequality’ from the past, but those of us with eye to see recognize *this* as the signs of our times. How do we live faithfully the value of respect for all people when this is our starting point? How do we hear the call of the gospel in light of the signs of *these* times?