• The subject could not be more timely

• There are many kinds of violence spreading throughout the world

• I want to tell you a story about how our presentation evolved, in direct correlation with the daily headlines

• I want to focus specifically on the violence of racism

• I want to share about how my own "learned ignorance" (I chose the oxymoronic term intentionally) about race was challenged, and about three people were who caused me to wrestle with my ignorance

• I want to share a few pieces of the "small stuff" that I think can help, and how people might use them

• Finally, I want to share a couple ideas about some implications the small steps have for the church, and not just the Catholic church
Nations & Insurrections

North Korea
Nations & Insurrections

Nigeria: Boko Haram (and the Nigerian government)
Nations & Insurrections

ISIS
Nations & Insurrections

Ukraine
Racism, Nationalism, Nazism
Racism, Nationalism, Nazism

Ferguson, MO
Google search: “Boat Refugees”
Myanmar/Rohingya refugees
Zaatari refugee camp, Jordan
Mother Nature's Violence

Mexico earthquakes
Irma devastation on St. Martins
Montana Wildfires
Irma-Jacksonville, FL
Political Violence
Political Violence
Political Violence
Violent Speech - Has anyone been on FaceBook or Twitter lately?
Trumpkins!
Snowflakes!
Orange Slug!
Throw ‘em in jail!
Etc., etc., etc.!

And all of this breeds
This

Which is where Shelby and I were six weeks or so ago: ready to call Diane and say we couldn’t do it, couldn’t see a way forward in this environment of fear, anger, and violence

He challenged me to tell him what I thought we should do, thinking as a Racism Committee co-convener. All I could think of was "one step at a time/one day at a time"

As we started to talk about the presentation, two ideas came to mind: DO sweat the small stuff; Keep your hand on the plough. So I Googled "Keep your hand on the plough" for images of ploughing, and I found some. But I found something more disturbing: a blog by Alyce McKenzie, a professor of homiletics at Southern Methodist University, reflecting on Luke 9:62, "Jesus said to him. "Once the hand is laid on the plow, no one who looks back is fit for the kingdom of God" (Jerusalem Bible). In the blog, she quoted Ethicist Sharon Welch to say...
This struck me because I had been thinking of how slaves, and Black people during Jim Crow (and still today) displayed and display such remarkable faith and dedication. It had also occurred to me that their choices were, and too often are, limited by circumstance. In these situations, faith and hope are sustenance, not adjuncts to a comfortable life. They don’t have the option of not going on, of taking their hands off the plough, of giving up and going back to a "normal" life.

I was indicted.

So where is my plough? at this moment in time, and for the past 12-13 years, my "plough" has been the Diocesan Racism Committee’s fields.

So I’ve been struggling to think of just what recommendations I can give for “not sweating the small stuff.” I don’t feel as though I’m a teacher on this subject, but a learner. I can share my own experiences, and what I have learned from them. I can share what I have learned from others as well. So that is what I want to share with you today. But first a little bit about myself, about three people who have profoundly affected my life, and about a few experiences that have convinced me that there IS no such thing as "small stuff," and that in fact the "big stuff" depends critically on the "small stuff."
My education about race and racism has been planted in and nurtured by relationships. To understand this, I think you first need to know a little about me.
• So who am I? Sort of grew up in two worlds in the Youngstown, OH area:

  • Struthers (school): Blue-collar; strong second/third-generation European immigrant population; few African-Americans—the first time I saw a Black kid was in HS; 4/~220 A-A in my class; precious little contact with non-Whites

  • Poland (Methodist church): Solid middle-class; not one Black person in either my church or PHS

• There is no doubt that I absorbed stereotypes without realizing it:

  • Blacks weren’t as smart (Karen Smith negated that rule, but I simply viewed her as exceptional)

  • The difference in economic status between Black and White people was due to culture & personal factors

  • Lack of real contact and lack of questioning meant that my assumptions were never challenged, nor did I ever challenge myself

  • My challenges came when I stepped into the world and met people who weren’t like me. That’s when the cognitive dissonance began to work on my mind.
• Cleveland native. Grew up in Glenville and earned music degree from Western Reserve University

• Concert pianist, choral conductor at Glenville HS with national reputation

• First holder of Kulas Fellowship in Choral Conducting under Robert Shaw with Cleveland Orchestra

• Came to Case midway through my Freshman year

• Opened my eyes to the power and joy of music
• Sang for him in Philharmonic chorus (Verdi Requiem, Mendelssohn Elijah with Wife Anita and Mel Hakola as Elijah). Glenville alumni my first experience with collaboration with African-Americans

• A hero, a mentor, an adviser, and a dear friend

• Cognitively dissident notes:
  • A BLACK man who is a classical musician?! (Story about Mom's comment?)
  • My experience ~1969-70 during Philharmonic conductor search.
• 1979: Moved to Berkley MI, a Detroit suburb. I commuted to Ann Arbor with John 2½ hours every day for three years (‘81-‘84). Plenty of time to talk.

• In the first wave of African-Americans in the integrated USMC Retired as a recruiter.

• First African-American Catholic I ever met.

• The cognitively dissonant notes:

  • Enlisted in the Marines at the time they were being desegregated, and made it his career.

  • When I knew him, he was a Marine Reserve recruiter/lab tech/snow-plowing business owner; Wife Ann worked as accountant at gas company and did taxes on the side.

  • So much for the lazy Black!

  • Doesn’t it seem silly?
• I met Shelby at a Pax Christi meeting in mid-2000s, before joining the Catholic church

• Enlisted me to join Racism Committee; I didn’t know what I was getting into

• Relationship developed while we worked together to design program to promote safe conversations on race.

• Grew into confidence with one another’s trustworthiness in sensitive areas

• Growth of the relationship allowed me to ask the question re Ed Burton’s query in early ’80s

• These relationships have allowed me to take more risks to reach out and fostered new relationships

• So: How to widen relationships in a general way, especially in church
If relationships are important, how can we foster them? The basic answer is to reach out:

Reach out beyond your comfort zone.

Find people where they are, or in a neutral, safe space.

Invite people into your own space.

Examples of ways you can connect with those not like you.
% Diocesan Racism Committee
  – Formed to find a way to combat racism
  – Create safe spaces for conversations about race.
% CAIR-Council on American-Islamic Relations
  (https://caircleveland.com)
  – Teatime for Peace
% Cleveland Foundation-Neighborhood Connections Programs
  (http://www.neighborhoodgrants.org)
  – PRISM racial equity leadership program ($)
  – Let’s Get Real About Race (moderated discussions)

(Page Turn) Places and Organizations that can help to make connections (As
Click & Clack, the car guys on NPR say, "Time for some shameless
commercialism")

(1) Diocesan Racism Committee: We have done facilitated conversations,
teacher in-service events, parish presentations, workshops on "Best Practices
for Shared Parishes," and two convocations on Race

( 2)Council on American-Islamic Relations: have activities for Muslims & non-
Muslims to come together for sharing of lives and experiences.

(3) Cleveland Foundation works with neighborhood groups through their
Neighborhood Connections programs, and sponsors training and conversation
opportunities.
(4) Cleveland Council on World Affairs and CIPUSA offer opportunities to host professionals from all over the world. From dinners to weekends to longer stays
But reaching out means being open to others. How well do we do that in our everyday lives? I want to focus our attention on the importance of environment when working to create a welcoming environment. Let’s talk about church.

1. Reflect on “All Are Welcome”
2. But are we:
   • Even when we want to welcome, we often don’t manage to do successfully.
     • Even when race or culture isn’t a part of the interaction it can be hard. Long-standing social groups can give off signals that make even people who are like them feel uncomfortable. (book clubs, church choirs)
   • Subliminal signals, cultural differences contribute

3. Eurocentric nature of US churches of almost ALL faiths: Rites, liturgies, images, music, and our indwelling inability to deal with race.

It’s hard to exit our comfort zone (PowerPoint presentations, for example)

Spend a bit of time focusing on the power of one aspect of our liturgical environment: art (music would be a good one also, so would preaching style, and others you might be able to name yourselves)

The Catholic church is full of art: paintings, icons, statuary, but what does it look like
• The Creation of Adam – Michelangelo
  • Gorgeous!
  • Stunning

• Does Adam look middle-eastern?

• God given White visage…it sure carries a message

• Richard Rohr's St. Augustine quote: "If you can comprehend it, it's not God."
• Jesus on the Cross

• These all seem so normal to us, but I want to reflect on my own experience with unexpected liturgical art

• Moved to Berkley, MI (Detroit suburb) from Idaho Falls, ID in 1979

• I joined Berkley United Methodist Church
• Pat joined Our Lady of LaSalette church in Berkley
  • Mission church by Brothers of LaSalette
  • The cross with hammer and tongs is their symbol
  • That was unexpected for me, thinking there never was a Catholic cross without a corpus

• Walked into LaSalette, and what did I see behind the altar?
Not only a bare cross!

A risen Christ over the altar, arms outstretched

Hard to describe the feeling of inclusion that gave my Protestant/Methodist-formed heart!

I felt almost instantly at home, before I even knew anyone in the Parish

But strangely, it worked both ways for me

• We moved from Berkley, MI to Milford, CT in 1985

• Pat joined St. Mary Church in Milford
I joined First & Summerfield Methodist Church in New Haven

Formed by merger of nearly 200-year old downtown church (hence the name "First Methodist Church") and a struggling African-American Methodist church in New Haven (Summerfield Church) This was the first truly integrated church I ever knew. What an experience!

Walked into FSUMC, and what did I see on the wall?
• A hand-painted icon!

• Not this particular one, but another painted by one of the member's brother.

• In the context of another move and family upheaval, it gave me a sense of unity despite our different faith communities

• No one can tell me that the art and environment in which we worship is unimportant!
• Reflect on Pat's experience with crucifixes at St. Mary of the Falls
“The Racial Divide in the US”
- Reflection for the World Day of Peace 2015
- A pastoral letter by Edward K. Braxton, Bishop of Belleville, IL, following multiple incidents and deaths of African-American young men in 2015
- “The narrative portrays an imagined Catholic Church in the United States in which most American Catholics are People of Color and White Catholics are members of a very small ‘minority group.’”

- Suggest reading this document if you have not

- The liturgical environment plays a role in the reflection

- Very powerful, if one can imagine a minority's point of view

- Reflect on experience in Nairobi, going to the bank – secular environment with no threat, but I was NOT feeling at home

- So here are some comparisons and alternative images to think about – they are quite easy to find.
• First image is a traditional European version of the nativity scene

• The second is from Mafa Christian community in Cameroun

• Series of New Testament scenes played by village people

• 62 scenes, from Annunciation to Pentecost

• Organized and made available by Vie de Jesus Mafa (Life of Jesus Mafa Association)

• To me, as a White person not of an African community, it stops me in my tracks and opens my mind. What about an African or African-American visitor to the church?
Traditional Italian

African

White-bread American

Native American

Oriental

Do the non-White images increase or decrease our sense of inclusion and unity?
• Traditional European image: beautiful; it gets the story across; the difference in class is evident

• For me, the power of the Mafa print is in part because it is the Black African that is the Samaritan. Just like Jesus's parables, it upsets the order of things.
First, something traditional: familiar (if you are White) images

In the center, another Mafa print: Stark and lonely; after the deed is done and only a few remain

On the right is the crucifix Becky sent from South Africa during semester abroad at University of Natal, which might be my “favorite” of all crucifixes I’ve seen
How many ways can you draw JOY? Does your reaction depend on the color of Jesus, or his joy?

So what else can we do to welcome the stranger?
Use St. Matthew, Baltimore as an example

• Clerical leadership: Fr. Joe Muth

• Returned to study homiletics at a Baptist seminary when coming to his appointment at St. Matthew.

• Community is comfortable with newcomers. Such a variety of people there now that almost anyone will find a familiar-looking face.

• Multiple immigrant communities present


• Homily ended by acknowledging that without that experience, St. Mathew would likely not exist

- Art and images
  - Provide recognizable faces to strangers and visitors, saying “you belong here”
  - Provide evidence to the dominant parish population that “others also belong here”

- Go beyond the ushers’ welcome (and there must be an ushers’ welcome)
  - Engage in parish life
  - Empower with the ability to affect parish governance, liturgical practice

- Reach out
  - Personally and as a parish
  - Create a relationship where you can be taught as well as teach
Keep your hand on the plough!

The pace is slow, but the furrow gets made

The seeds must be planted

And nurtured

And the weeds and pests dealt with

Eventually the harvest of blessings will be reaped

And then we start all over again in the spring!

*From the Negro Spiritual “Hold On”*