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IN THE  
**SPIRIT OF  
SOLIDARITY**

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PROVIDENCE  
COLLEGE



## IN THE SPIRIT OF SOLIDARITY

While recounting the story of St. Dominic, Blessed Jordan of Saxony, his close friend and eventual successor, famously said this of him: Everybody was enfolded in the wide embrace of Dominic's charity. Bl. Jordan put no conditions on St. Dominic's loving embrace. He recounts that he was full of affection and gave himself utterly to caring for his neighbors. Such is our sacred heritage as a Catholic and Dominican institution. This model has been passed down to us and it continues to drive us. We seek to emulate this wide embrace of charity in our very own college community, which is to say, we seek to become a beloved community. In a special way in this statement, I would like to reflect on how this sacred heritage drives our embrace of racial, ethnic, and socio-economic diversity.

Providence College recognizes and treasures the value of a diverse community. Such a commitment is articulated clearly in the [College's Mission Statement](#). For our community, the question is not whether we are committed to diversity, but how that commitment is enacted throughout our institution. How do we understand diversity in a Catholic and Dominican context? How might we embrace inclusion efforts by means of our Catholic and Dominican identity? These questions ring throughout our campus. They demand urgent attention. In what follows, I will offer a reflection on our institutional embrace of diversity and inclusion efforts. I will also offer four principles from our tradition that will ground and guide our effort.





## HOW CATHOLIC AND DOMINICAN IDENTITY DRIVES OUR EMBRACE OF DIVERSITY

PC200's Future of Higher Education Research Team eloquently summarized the Catholic and Dominican embrace of diversity in its 2017 report. They wrote:

The Catholic and Dominican valuation of diversity is grounded in the fundamental solidarity that unites us as human beings made in God's image and likeness, redeemed by Christ His Son, and destined for a shared life of perfect virtue in His Kingdom. And as such, the Catholic and Dominican approach to diversity avoids many of the pitfalls of alternative ideologies. We affirm the value of diverse cultures, perspectives, approaches, and ideas without despairing of the possibility of being united in the truth of our common human nature, the truth of our common destiny, and the truth of Jesus Christ. We refuse to accept the easy panacea of relativism, because we hold in reverence the truth and beauty of our human solidarity as knowers and lovers of truth ([Culture of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion #7](#)).

This belief in a fundamental solidarity drives our approach. In the Catholic social tradition, solidarity first names an interdependence between the diversity of persons, communities, and cultures of our world. The tradition then also elevates that interdependence, identifying solidarity with the aspiration to seek after right relationship amid that diversity. Such an aspiration is important because the world isn't set aright. Injustice, marginalization, stigmatization, and more wage war on this fundamental solidarity, often along the lines of the differences that make up what we mean by diversity. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. powerfully wrote in his [Letter from Birmingham Jail](#) in 1963, which was echoed in PC's own [Black Studies Program's Heritage Journal](#) (Spring 2021, p. 19), "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

We believe that a Catholic embrace of diversity is also an embrace of the work for justice. The wide embrace of St. Dominic's charity demands a corresponding embrace of work for justice and restoration. In its pastoral letter against racism ([Open Wide Our Hearts](#)), the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops points out that "to do justice requires an honest acknowledgement of our failures and the restoring of right relationships between us." We seek both to listen to the voices of those experiencing suffering and marginalization in this community and to work collaboratively for an ever more just and charitable community, a beloved community. I've included along with this document a longer, more detailed description of these ideas and their connection to the idea of the beloved community at Providence College.

## PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE US

At Providence College, our desire for justice and our journey toward becoming the community to which God calls us to be will be directed by foundational principles from the Catholic and Dominican tradition. The following four principles will drive our embrace of diversity and our pursuit of the beloved community in our midst.

### 01

#### DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

The Dignity of the Human Person: First and foremost, among all principles, is the unshakeable belief in the life and dignity of each human person. The Church defines this belief as the cornerstone of all her social teachings and the foundation for her moral vision for society. The Scriptures and the teachings of the Church consistently remind us that each has been created in the image and likeness of God and is of inestimable value.

The Church teaches that the life and dignity of every person must be respected and protected at every stage and in every condition. Catholic Social Teaching concerning the dignity of the human person is the basis for the Church's belief that life is sacred from the moment of conception to natural death, as well as the basis for the Church's commitment to civil rights and equality for all people.

Any failure to honor and celebrate the precious life and dignity of our brothers and sisters is sinful and wrong and demands a commitment to address behaviors and attitudes that are inconsistent with the charity to which we are called. As stated eloquently by the USCCB in Brothers and Sisters to Us,

“Racism is a sin: a sin that divides the human family, blots out the image of God among specific members of that family, and violates the fundamental human dignity of those called to be children of the same Father.”

We unequivocally condemn racism and any discrimination that demeans others as an assault on the God-given dignity of each person.

## PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE US, CONT.

### 02 CARE FOR THE COMMON GOOD

We also are reminded of a sacred call to work for the common good—the recognition that each person must consider the good of others and the good of the whole human family. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (#1906) defines the common good as

“the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily.”

Our Providence College community contributes to the common good in a unique way by providing social conditions proper to an institution of higher education that allow its members to flourish more fully and more easily, preparing students to make their own contributions to the broader common good of human society.

As stated in the recently published book *Providence College: Our Catholic and Dominican Mission* (Page 33),

“We aim to equip our graduates with the habits needed to promote the dignity of all persons and to seek after the common good, which is the flourishing of each and all.”

Our sacred task at Providence College is to ensure that our students and all members of our community flourish through their affiliation with PC. We fail in this task if certain members of the Friar Family are denied this opportunity, and we must acknowledge and address our failings and shortcomings. Furthermore, indifference to the painful experiences of any member of our community is equally wrong. As stated by the USCCB in Brothers and Sisters to Us, “The absence of personal fault for an evil does not absolve one of all responsibility. We must seek to resist and undo injustices we have not caused, lest we become bystanders who tacitly endorse evil and so share in guilt in it.” We should hold each other accountable for failures to abide by these explicit teachings.

Closely related to a care for the common good is a recognition of the solidarity of the human family—a further recognition that each of us is precious, and that all are interconnected and interdependent. As shared by St. John Paul II:

In the spirit of solidarity and with the instruments of dialogue, we will learn respect for every human person; respect for the true value and cultures of others; respect for the legitimate autonomy and self-determination of others; (and) to look beyond ourselves in order to understand and support the good of others. (World Day of Peace Message, 1986)

### 03

#### **SOLIDARITY OF THE HUMAN FAMILY**

The human family consists of people of diverse faiths, experiences, and backgrounds—all created and loved by God. Therefore, striving to protect that divine love, we must be a community committed to justice and equity—a community that acknowledges each of its members as a full member of the community, provided with the same opportunities for learning and growth in God’s love and with the ability to flourish and enjoy the rights, privileges, and benefits the College offers.

We are also called to strengthen the entire community by responding to the marginalized and vulnerable among us. The College must commit itself to providing a welcoming environment to all, but especially to those among us who face economic hardship or insecurity or who have been marginalized because of their race, social status, immigration status, or other differences. This is entirely consistent with the approach taken by Jesus, who ministered especially to the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized.

### 04

#### **PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR**

As an advocate for social justice and equality, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was committed to finding solutions to the inextricable link between racial injustice and economic disparities. Dr. King’s Poor People’s Campaign highlighted the need for equal opportunities and eradicating poverty. Similarly, as a Catholic and Dominican institution that values the beloved community, we have a responsibility to address inequalities and support those marginalized and vulnerable through what is called “a preferential option for the poor.” Fundamental to the preferential option for the poor, Catholic social teaching upholds the inherent human dignity of every individual, emphasizes the significance of just community, and challenges systemic injustices through solidarity. Likewise, at Providence College, we have a moral obligation to prioritize the needs of those marginalized while seeking to create a community where everyone, especially those vulnerable among us, is included, feels a sense of belonging, and is treated with dignity and love.



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