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Chicago Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Perry, postulator for the sainthood cause of Fr. Augustus Tolt

Chicago Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Perry, postulator for the sainthood cause of Fr. Augustus Tolton, speaks at the Dominicans' motherhouse in Nashville, Tennessee, Feb. 10, 2019. Perry has been appointed chair of the U.S. bishops' Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism. (OSV News/Courtesy of the Nashville Dominicans)

A Chicago bishop has been tapped to lead the U.S. bishops' ongoing efforts to combat racism.

Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Perry of Chicago has been named chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism.

The appointment, made by the bishops' conference president, Archbishop Timothy Broglio of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services, was announced May 10.

He succeeds Archbishop Shelton Fabre of Louisville, Kentucky, who was named to head the committee in 2018 and recently requested a new chair be named following his appointment to Louisville last year.

The committee was formed in 2017 by Cardinal Daniel DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, then conference president, to address racism, which the U.S. bishops' conference has described on several occasions as "America's original sin."

Polls at the time showed Americans were both deeply divided and concerned over racial inequalities in the U.S.

Upon creating the committee, the bishops declared that racism, along with "the demonic ideologies of white supremacy and neo-Nazism," remained "a blot on our national life and continues to cause acts and attitudes of hatred, as recent events have made evident."

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Days prior to the committee's formation, a "Unite the Right Rally" took place in Charlottesville, Virginia, with white supremacist James Alex Fields Jr. driving into a crowd of counterprotesters, killing one and injuring dozens. Fields was later sentenced.

Bishop George Murry of Youngstown, Ohio, was appointed the committee's first chairman, but he stepped down in May 2018 after being diagnosed with a rare form of leukemia. He died in June 2020.

Then-Bishop Fabre, who was head of the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux, Louisiana, was appointed May 4, 2018, by DiNardo, as conference president, to chair the committee following Murry's resignation.

In November 2018, as chairman of the bishops' Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism, Fabre led the writing of a pastoral letter against racism titled "Open Wide Our Hearts — The Enduring Call to Love," approved by the body of bishops in 2018.