



# open wide our hearts

## **Novena Reflection**

*by: Anne Smith, SJB Parishioner*

It's easy for those of us who are white, living in predominantly white Plymouth, to think that the evils of racism and social injustice don't touch our community. But we all, yes ALL, have unconscious biases, or perceptions, about people different than us. It's not unique to current times. How many of us remember our grandfathers telling ethnic jokes... Polish, or Irish, or German, depending on our family's background? Human nature leads us to be more comfortable with "people like us" and distrusting of those who are not.

Several years ago a friend of mine who has traveled all over the world and is the most accepting person I know, said that we ALL have internal beliefs about other races and cultures different than our own, and I remember realizing and understanding the truth of that for the first time. It happens so instinctively we often don't realize it. For me, becoming aware of those biases, and challenging them, is something I reflected on during our novena as I recited the prayer and listened to the music that sums it up so well: "We are called...to act with justice, we are called...love tenderly, we are called...to serve one another...to walk humbly with God."

We can start right here in Plymouth, getting to know fellow parishioners and residents of color, educating ourselves about the injustices people of color face, questioning our friends and neighbors when we hear racially insensitive comments, and standing up to make sure people of color are treated with dignity and compassion. In short, we can lead with love, just like Jesus did.

-SJB parishioner Anne Smith