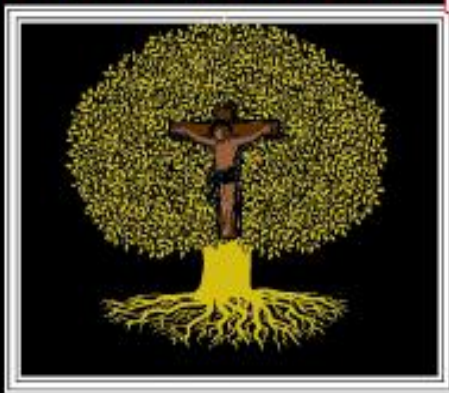


My Little Black Catholic History Book



**History and Resources for
Celebrating National Black Catholic
History Month in November**

Roman Catholic Diocese of Charleston

Office of Ethnic Ministries

My Little Black Catholic History Book

History and Resources for Celebrating
National Black Catholic History Month

Compiled and developed by Kathleen Merritt
Roman Catholic Diocese of Charleston
Office of Ethnic Ministries
Greenville, South Carolina

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Introduction

In Celebration of Black Catholic History Month

Did you know that November is Black Catholic History Month?

This month, we're honoring the men and women from Africa who have pioneered the faith! Many forget that Christianity didn't start in Europe. Black Catholics have had a huge impact on the history and traditions of Christianity. The church has been celebrating Black Catholic History Month since 1990, when the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus of the United States instigated it. November seemed appropriate because it holds special days for two prominent African Catholics: St. Augustine, whose birthday is on November 13, and St. Martin de Porres, whose feast day is celebrated on November 3.

Three popes—Saints Victor I, Melchiades, and Gelasius I—were born in Africa, and led the early church through much turmoil. There are also many Black Catholic saints (Monica of Hippo, Augustine of Hippo, Perpetua, and Felicitas to name a few) and leaders (such as Rev. Augustus Tolton and Daniel Rudd) whose actions and witnesses of faith helped shape the church into what it is today.

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About the Book

November is the time when people celebrate Thanksgiving, and Black Catholics celebrate Black Catholic History Month. November is also the perfect time for Black Catholics to reflect, renew and be

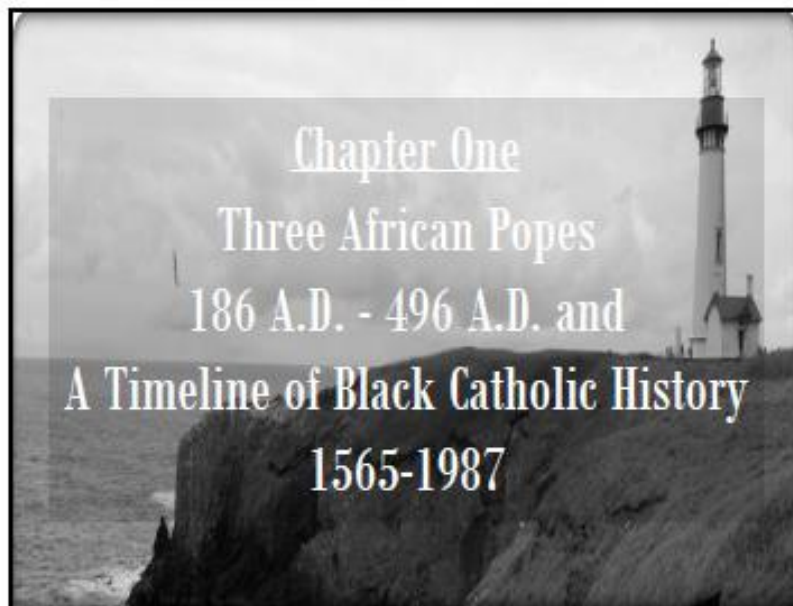


thankful for the gift of faith - the gift of a Catholic faith that is rich and unique. As Black Catholics, we possess a proud history that must be passed on to future generations.

In 1990, Cyprian Davis wrote that history in a book titled *The History of Black Catholics in the United States*. Fr. Cyprian Davis is a Benedictine monk of St. Meinrad Archabbey and a historian. He is also a founding member of the National Black Clergy Caucus. The chronology of events in this book begins in 1565 and continues through 1987. As you celebrate Black Catholic History Month in November, please remember Cyprian Davis, and his contribution in preserving the rich history of Black Catholics, in your prayers.

My Little Black Book of Black Catholic History was compiled by Kathleen Merritt, the Director of the Diocese of Charleston Office of Ethnic Ministries, to be used as a resource for Black Catholics to learn, celebrate and pass it on!

From Black Catholics in Africa to The United States, significant historical events are highlighted. An essay on the history of Black Catholics in the Diocese of Charleston, *Catholic, Black and Proud*, by Suzanne Krebsbach, is also included. The final chapter of the book contains suggestions on ways to celebrate as a parish, family or individual. The best part about this celebration is that you have the whole month to celebrate. So let's celebrate and Pass It On!



Chapter One
Three African Popes
186 A.D. - 496 A.D. and
A Timeline of Black Catholic History
1565-1987

A selected group of significant historical events are outlined in this chapter. The information on Three African Popes was obtained from the *Catholic Online* website at www.catholic.org.

Three African Popes

Pope Victor was the first pope to use Latin as the official language of the Church in his writings. He died a martyr for the faith and was buried close to St. Peter in the Vatican.



PAPACY: 186-197 A.D.

FEAST DAY: July 28

Pope Saint Miltiades, also called Melchiades, was the first pope to receive the Lateran Palace from Constantine. It became the administrative center of the Church.

PAPACY: 311-314 A.D.

FEAST DAY: December 10

Pope Gelasius I was a prolific writer. His ministry was characterized by a call to orthodoxy, an assertive push for papal authority, and decreasing the tension between the Church in the West and the East.

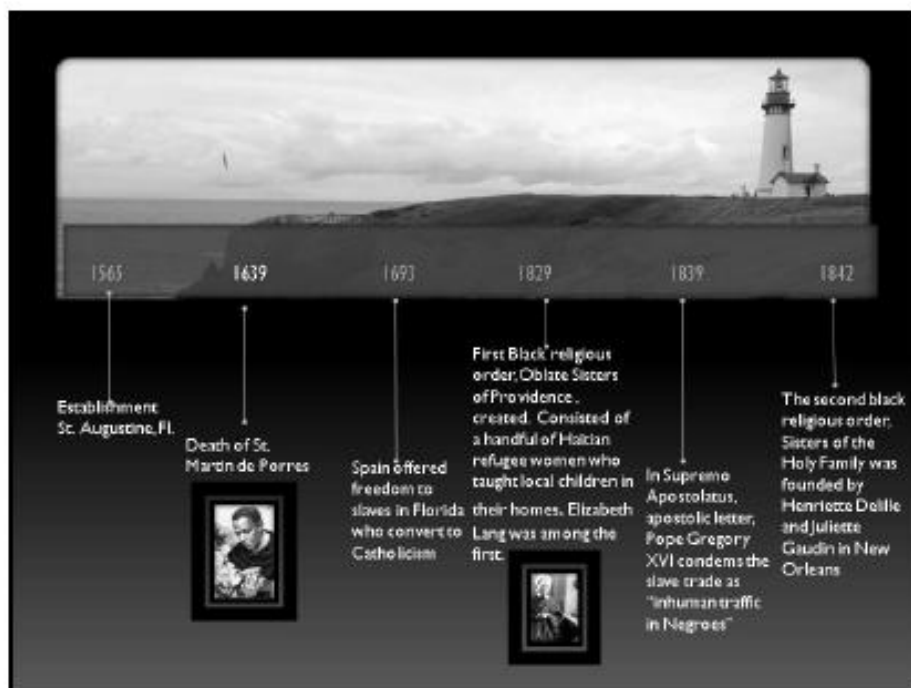
PAPACY: 492-496 A.D.

FEAST DAY: November 21²²

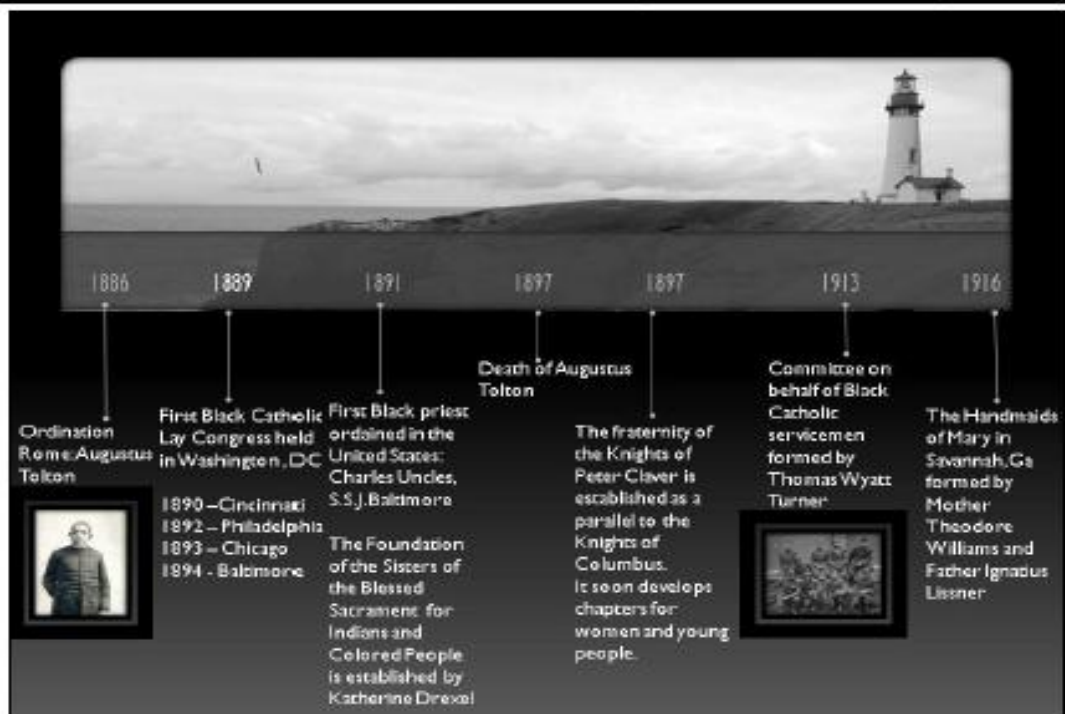
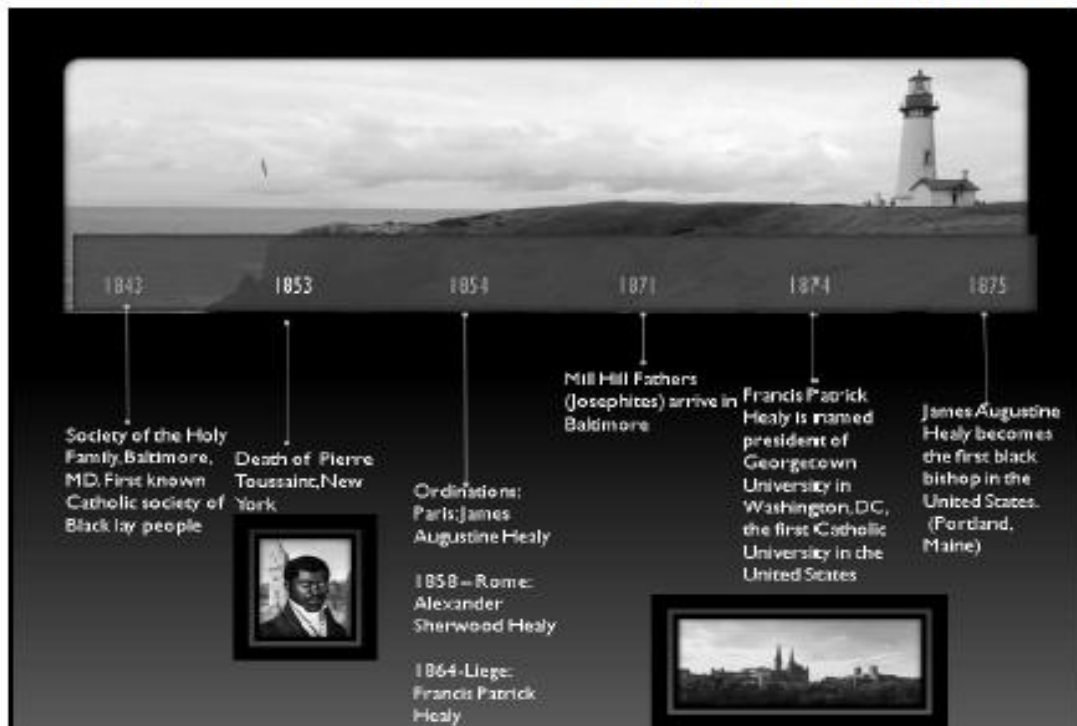
A Timeline of Black Catholic History

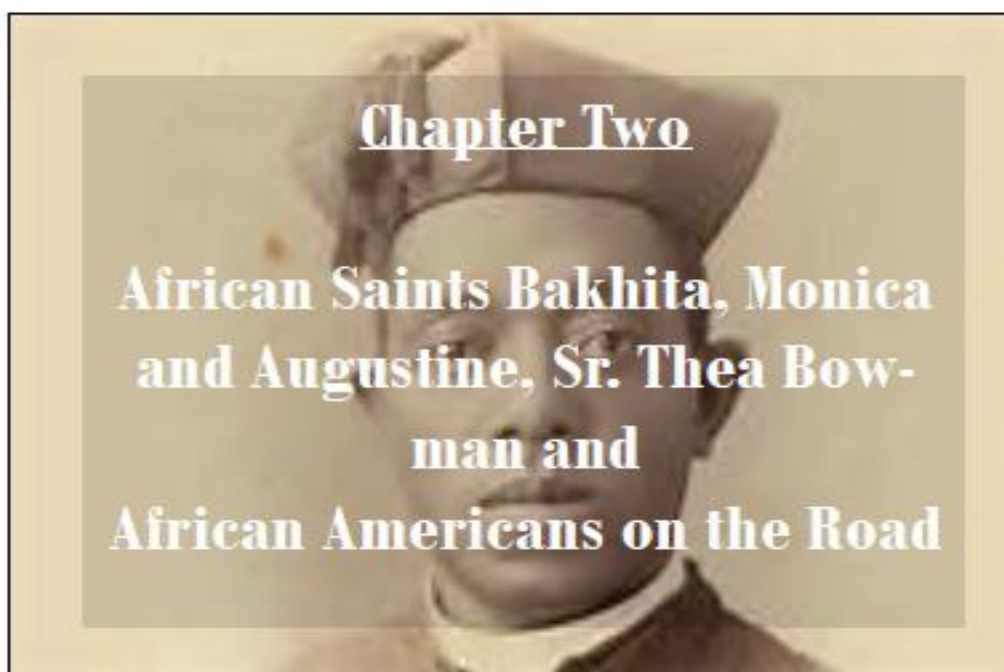
1565-1987

Although this is not a complete timeline of all of the historical events that took place for Black Catholics, this listing is the result of gathering documented events from two sources: 1) Cyprian Davis' *The History of Black Catholics* (1990), pg. 261-262 and, 2) Archdiocese of Denver Office of Black Catholics *A Proud History* (2014).



Black Popes and History Timeline





In this chapter, highlighted are African Saints Bakhita, Monica, and her son Augustine. A “Reflection on Sr. Thea Bowman” and a series of questions and answers on African American Saints is included in this chapter.

St. Josephine Bakhita was born in a village in Sudan. Bakhita was not the name her mother gave her. Bakhita was kidnapped by slavers and sold into slavery. The frightful and tormenting experience she went through made her forget her name. Her kidnappers named her Bakhita, which means fortunate. After being sold to a Venetian merchant, Bakhita went to Italy to be a nanny servant of a little girl. She was treated as an outcast because of her black skin by the peasants and other servers. Throughout her life, Bakhita remained kind and generous to others. With the help of a kind priest, Bakhita grew closer to God, and eventually embraced the Catholic Faith. After becoming of age, Bakhita expressed her freedom by the law of Italy and answered her call to be a religious with the Daughters of Charity, where everyone still calls her “Mother Moretta” (our Black Mother).



Born: 1869 Died: 1947

Josephine Bakhita was beatified on May 17, 1992, and canonized on October 1, 2000.

There is a movie about the life of Josephine Bakhita on DVD called **BAHKITA FROM SLAVE TO SAINT**. An excellent way to celebrate Black Catholic History Month...movie and popcorn.

The information contained in this summary was obtained from the *Catholic Online* website located at www.catholic.org.

African Saints, Thea Bowman and the Road to Sainthood

St. Monica is the patron saint for mothers, wives and abused victims. She is also the mother of St. Augustine. Monica was born in Tagaste, North Africa. At a very young age, she had a conversion experience and lived a life of virtue. She married a non-Christian man named Patricius. Patricius came home drunk every day, had a violent temper, and Monica was the victim of his rage. Patricius was unfaithful. Monica's life was full of trials. She endured her trials with patience, gentleness and kindness. She prayed for her husband's conversion and for his mother. Before Patricius' death, he did accept his wife's faith and said that it was because he admired her strong faith and kindness. Her strong faith and prayers paid off.



St. Augustine, St. Monica's son, was seventeen when his father died. Monica and Patricius had three sons and St. Augustine was the one who gave his mother the worst heartaches. St. Augustine was brilliant in his studies, therefore they sent him off to Carthage to become a man of sophistication and culture.

The information contained in this summary was obtained from the *Catholic Online* website located at www.catholic.org.

St. Augustine (continued)

Although he excelled in his studies, his behavior caused his mother a lot of pain. In addition to unacceptable behavior, Augustine went into loose living with women, alcohol and addictions. Monica never gave up on her son, and continued to pray, fast and beg God for her son's conversion for 17 years. At the age of 29, Augustine was a successful teacher and working under the influence of Bishop Ambrose when he decided to embrace Christianity, to live a life of celibacy and devote his life to God's service.



Not only was St. Augustine a great Bishop, he became one of the greatest saints and doctors of the Catholic Church. This was the cumulating point of his mother's prayers being answered.

The Archdiocese of Baltimore has a listing of African Saints on their African American Ministry website. This PDF document can be obtained at the following web address <https://www.archbalt.org/ministries/african-american-catholic-ministries/>

St. Monica: Born: 332 A.D. Died: 387 A.D.

Feast Day: August 27

St. Augustine: Born: 354 A.D. Died: 430 A.D.

Feast Day: August 28

What I Wish I Had Seen and Heard!

Reflections on the Life of Thea Bowman

By Kathleen Merritt

Although I've never had the opportunity to meet Sr. Thea Bowman, I feel like I had. I was first introduced to her legacy by my mother when I was a teen. It was during the late 70s, when Sr. Thea came to speak to African American Catholics at St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church in Greenville, South Carolina. Stories of what she did and what she said on that day are still being told today. In my parents' house, whenever I would hear my mother start a conversation off by saying, "If anybody asks you who you are, tell them you are a child of God," I knew that what was to follow included things Sr. Thea Bowman said to them on the day she came to St. Anthony of Padua.



Thea Bowman

Mary Corner recalls being present on the day that Sr. Thea came to Greenville. "Sr. Thea spoke with excitement as she explained to us what African American spirituality was about.

She spoke, sang and actually danced on the altar. I had never seen someone dance on the altar before. Sr. Thea told us that African American spirituality was not something we should be ashamed of, and that we should share it with the Church by our words, our singing and using our talents to show God that our talents are no longer hidden," said Corner.

The information contained in the following summary of the life of Sr. Thea Bowman was taken from the book, *Thea Bowman In My Own Words*, in the Introduction by Maurice J. Nutt, C.Ss.R., (2009). Pages vii-xiii.

Thea was born in Yazoo City, Mississippi in 1937 and was an only child. Her father was a physician and her mother, a school teacher. Growing up in the South introduced her to all different forms of racism and prepared her at an early age for the leader she was called to be. Her mother taught her to never return evil insults inflicted upon her. Little Thea spent a lot of her growing years listening and learning from the elders. She was exposed to the richness of her African American culture through its history, stories, music, songs, dances, prayers, food customs and traditions.

African Saints, Thea Bowman and the Road to Sainthood

She attended a Catholic school established by the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration for African Americans in Canton, Mississippi. At age ten she decided to become Catholic. At age 15 she decided she wanted to join the Franciscan sisters and became the only African American member in the convent. She became a teacher and, under the guidance of her Franciscan superiors, went on to earn her doctorate in English at the Catholic University of America in 1972.

Throughout her career she continued to speak and write about the significance of Black spirituality, Black song, the Black family and on being Black and Catholic. Her most notable contribution to the history of Black Catholics was in 1989, when she addressed the United States Catholic Bishops at their June meeting. By this time, Sr. Thea had been diagnosed with cancer and was weak and in a wheelchair. She did not let the deterioration of her body stop her from telling the bishops the “true truth” about what it means to be Black and Catholic, about African American history and spirituality. She challenged the Bishops to continue to evangelize the African American community, to promote full participation of Blacks in leadership and to understand the value of Catholic schools in the African American community. At the end of her presentation, she asked the bishops to move

closer and sing with her, "We Shall Overcome"
They did exactly that.

As a Black Catholic leader in the Church today,
I am thankful and appreciative that my mother
introduced me to the legacy of Sr. Thea Bow-
man, a woman who lived her life as a saint!



Thea Bowman, F.S.P.A.

A Prayer

"Olde Folks Child", from your elders
you learned values, survival skills and how
to face pain, life and death.

You turned life's experiences into teach-
ing moments, refusing to be overwhelmed
by problems you encountered.

Thea, you prayed, sang, danced and
preached your way into places where few
people of color dared to go.

You saw beauty in the magnificent mo-
saic of the various cultures and had the gift
of bringing others to a profound sense of
their own dignity.

Thea, "olde folks child", pray for us
before almighty God for the graces we need
to hand on your legacy, knowing that the
only way we can build the kingdom of God
is by working together to build faith and
strengthen community.

*Author: Sr. Celeste Donohue, D.C.
Imprimatur: Most Rev. David B. Thompson, D.D.,
Bishop of Charleston*

African Americans on the Road to Sainthood

Important Questions and Answers

- Q. *Are there any African American saints?*
- A. No, there are no African American saints at this time; however, there are many Black saints, many from Africa. There are currently four African American leaders who are on the path to sainthood. They are: Venerable Pierre Toussaint, Mother Mary Elizabeth Lang, Venerable Henriette Delille and Fr. Augustus Tolton
- Q. *How does one become a saint?*
- A. The making of a saint is a process. To learn more about that process, please visit the Father Augustus Tolton website. Under the tab "The Making of a Saint," you will find information on the process. The web address is <http://www.toltoncanonization.org>.

Q. Is there anything I can do to help with the process?

A. You can pray the special prayer for canonization that simultaneously presents to God a request for healing or other special intention. You can also talk-up the story of a cause for canonization to your parish, prayer group or Bible Study group, your children and grandchildren. Another way to help the cause would be to attend the various events sponsored for the cause. Each of the causes listed in question number one has a website with a lot of information that will be helpful to you if you are interested in learning more and/or supporting these causes. The prayers for intercession, complete bios and updates on the status of their roads to sainthood are also on the website.

Venerable Pierre Toussaint (1776-1853)

<http://www.obmny.org/PTCauseandGuild.htm>

Mother Mary Elizabeth Lang (1784-1882)

<http://www.motherlange.org/>

African Saints, Thea Bowman and the Road to Sainthood

Venerable Henrietta Delille (1813-1862)

<http://www.sistersoftheholymfamily.com/CanonizationProcess.html>

Fr. Augustus Tolton (1854-1897)

<http://www.toltoncanonization.org>



*The Office of Black
Catholics for the Diocese
of Charleston 2014 Day of
Reflection "Walking the
Walk and Talking the Talk
on the Leader's Path to
Sainthood" can be viewed
online at [http://youtu.be/
HxTASzXlhG4](http://youtu.be/HxTASzXlhG4)*

On the Road to Sainthood: Leaders of African Descent



Venerable Pierre Toussaint

(1776-1853)

Venerable Pierre Toussaint was born a slave in Haiti and was brought from Haiti to New York, where he apprenticed under a popular hairstylist. He eventually became the most sought after hairdresser of high society women. Upon the death of his master, he gained his freedom and was very successful as one of the country's first Black entrepreneurs. He became quite wealthy, but instead of spending lavishly on himself, he supported the church and the poor. He and his wife sheltered orphans, refugees and other street people in their home. He founded one of New York's first orphanages and raised money for the city's first cathedral. Even during yellow fever epidemics, Toussaint would risk his life to help others by nursing the sick and praying with the dying.



Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange

(1784-1882)

Mother Mary Lange was the foundress and first superior general of the Oblate Sisters of Providence (1829-1832), the first congregation of African American women religious in the Catholic Church. On July 2, 1829, Elizabeth and three other women professed their vows and became the Oblate Sisters of Providence. This congregation would educate and evangelize African Americans. They educated youth and provided a home for orphans. People freed from slavery were educated and at times admitted into the congregation. They nursed the terminally ill during the cholera epidemic of 1832, sheltered the elderly and even served as domestics at St. Mary's Seminary.

She was born Elizabeth Lange, a native of the Caribbean, believed to be Cuban-born of Haitian descent. By 1813, Providence directed her to Baltimore, Md., where a large community of French speaking Catholics from Haiti was established. She died in 1882.



Venerable Henriette Delille
(1813-1862)

Henriette Delille was born in New Orleans, where she lived all of her life. Her family was part Creole and she was drawn to that heritage. She was determined to help those in need for the love of Jesus and for the sake of the Gospel. Delille was also a person who suffered as she made her way through life, bearing crosses. She taught that sanctity can be attained in following the path of Jesus. It was in this manner that she dealt with her troubles and major obstacles to achieve her goals.

Some of the troubles Delille met were the resistance of the ruling population to the idea of a Black religious congregation; the lack of finances to do the work; the taunts and disbelief of people in her mission; the lack of support from both the church and civil authority; and poor health.

In 1842, she founded the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family. Delille died on Nov. 17, 1862. Her obituary states, "Miss Henriette Delille had for long years consecrated herself totally to God without reservation to the instruction of the ignorant and principally to the slave."



Father Augustus Tolton
(1854-1897)

Servant of God Father Augustus Tolton is the first identified Black priest in the United States. Born the son of slaves in Missouri, he studied for the priesthood in Rome because no American seminary would accept him. Sent to the Diocese of Quincy in western Illinois, he later came to Chicago to start a parish for Black Catholics.

Throughout his life, Tolton endured racism on every level, even in the church. But through it all, he remained faithful to the Lord, his church and his people. He was 43 years old when he died in 1897.

The Archdiocese of Chicago formally introduced his cause for sainthood in March 2010.

Note: In honor of Black History Month, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops posted on its website these short biographies of American Catholics of African descent who are on the path to canonization (Photos provided by Catholic News Service).

Reprinted from the digital edition of "Catholic New World" Newspaper for the Archdiocese of Chicago, 2/23-03/08, 2014.

Cause for Canonization Augustus Tolton Prayer

O God, * we give you thanks for your servant and priest, Father Augustus Tolton, * who labored among us in times of contradiction, * times that were both beautiful and paradoxical. * His ministry helped lay the foundation for a truly Catholic gathering in faith in our time. * We stand in the shadow of his ministry. * May his life continue to inspire us * and imbue us with that confidence and hope * that will forge a new evangelization for the Church we love.

Father in Heaven, * Father Tolton's suffering service sheds light upon our sorrows; * we see them through the prism of your Son's passion and death. * If it be your Will, O God, * glorify your servant, Father Tolton, * by granting the favor I now request through his intercession * (*mention your request*) * so that all may know the goodness of this priest * whose memory looms large in the Church he loved.

Prayer cont'd

Complete what you have begun in us * that we might work for the fulfillment of your kingdom.* Not to us the glory,* but glory to you O God, through Jesus Christ, your Son* and our Lord; * Father, Son and Holy Spirit,* you are our God, living and reigning forever and ever.
Amen

2010 Bishop Joseph N. Perry

Imprimatur

Francis Cardinal George, OMI

Archdiocese of Chicago

To report any spiritual or physical favors granted through prayer in Father Tolton's name, please write:

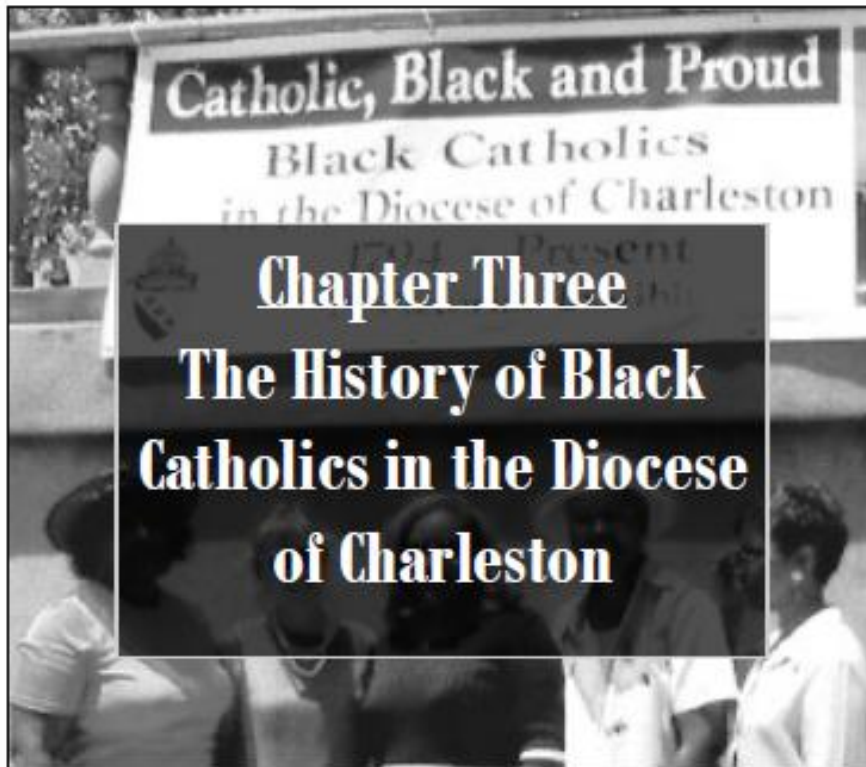
**Office of the Cardinal
Archdiocese of Chicago
835 North Rush Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611**

The Black Bishops of the United States 2014



<p>Most Rev. Wilton D. Gregory, SLD Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Atlanta</p>	<p>Most Rev. John H. Ricard, SSJ (Retired) Bishop Emeritus, Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee</p>	<p>Most Rev. Martin D. Holley Titular Bishop of Rusicade and Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Washington D.C.</p>	<p>Most Rev. Joseph N. Perry Titular Bishop of Rusicade and Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Chicago</p>	<p>Most Rev. Edward K. Braxton, Ph.D., STD Bishop of the Diocese of Belleville</p>	<p>Most Rev. George V. Murry, SJ Titular Bishop of Rusicade and Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Youngstown</p>
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<p>Most Rev. Guy Sansaricq (Retired) Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Brooklyn</p>	<p>Most Rev. J. Terry Steib, SVD Bishop of the Diocese of Memphis</p>	<p>Most Rev. Shelton J. Fabre Bishop of the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux</p>	<p>Most Rev. Curtis J. Guillory, SVD Bishop of the Diocese of Beaumont</p>
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An Essay by Suzanne Krebsbach on
the History of Black Catholics in
South Carolina 1820-2002

Black Catholic History
Catholic, Black and Proud
*An Essay on Black Catholics in the Diocese of
Charleston By Suzanne Krebsbach*

ENDURING FAITH

The story of Catholic Hill in the Colleton County town of Ritter serves as a metaphor for black Catholics in South Carolina. While the Catholic Hill experience is unique in many respects, it is emblematic of the struggle for the faith in the way that the people of Catholic Hill maintained their identity despite decades of hardship and neglect. In his first mission after taking up the care of the Diocese of Charleston in 1820, Bishop John England sent a priest to Colleton County to serve the spiritual needs of several Catholic plantation owners and their slaves in 1824. In previous years several families, among whom were the Bellingers, Pinckneys, and Smith, had converted to Roman Catholicism and had their slaves baptized as well. These family plantations were concentrated on the Ashepoo River west of Walterboro. The church of St. James the Greater was built in 1835 but burned in 1856. Before it could be rebuilt, Civil War erupted, changing the lives of all South Carolinians. Few of the faithful remained on the Ashepoo in the aftermath of the devastation; the white families left the county, and the newly freed slaves were too poor to carry the burden of a new church. The diocese was in shambles. Churches throughout the state had

The History of Black Catholics in the Diocese of Charleston

been burned or abandoned. Emancipation had freed the former slaves of the region but there were few viable institutions in which they could participate.

The black families of Catholic Hill, without a priest, sacraments, or a church building, however, kept the flame of faith alive for many years. The former slave Vincent de Paul Davis took the responsibility for instructing the children of the community in the basics of the Catholic faith. According to some accounts, in 1897 Father Daniel Berberich, a priest from Charleston, visited Ritter and stumbled on what he called a “lost” colony of Catholics on the upper reaches of the Ashepoo River. Other accounts note that the Mill Hill Fathers, or Josephites (an English missionary order) from St. Peter’s Church in Charleston, had responsibility for Beaufort, Walterboro, Coosaw and other places in the 1880s.¹ Berberich was responsible, however, for rebuilding the church.

In 1935, more than 100 years after it was first established, a new church was built and the old school remodeled. While the romantic version of discovering a forgotten Catholic colony in a remote section of the South Carolina sounds more appealing than the unadorned records of the traveling missionaries, the strength of the story lies in its appeal to the enduring legacy of black Catholics. In the words of Cyprian Davis, a

noted Black Catholic historian and Benedictine monk, this church, and its community, are a visible monument to the tenacious faith of Black Catholics in South Carolina.²

IN THE BEGINNING

Catholics black and white share a history in this state. Black Catholics emerged with a distinct identity in the nineteenth century. The first Catholics in what is now South Carolina were Spanish soldiers and slaves with Hernan de Soto and other expeditions. Spanish settlers at Santa Elena were undoubtedly Catholic. Although English colonists were not Catholic, and there were laws prohibiting this faith, by the eighteenth century there were a handful of Catholics in Charleston. There is some evidence that African slaves imported into Charles Town in the early years of the slave trade may have been Catholics, converted in Africa by Portuguese slave traders.³ That small population grew appreciably with the influx of French refugees from Acadia in 1755 and a later flood of refugees, black and white, from the Haitian revolution in Santo Domingo in 1793. It is possible these West Indian slaves had been baptized and kept the faith along with their masters.⁴

THE FIRST BISHOP

Bishop John England had many priorities when he arrived in Charleston in 1820. He founded a Catholic newspaper, the *United States Catholic*

The History of Black Catholics in the Diocese of Charleston

Miscellany; he established the cathedral church, St. Finbar; he opened the Seminary of St. John the Baptist to train native clergy; he dispatched what priests he had to minister to the surrounding plantations; and he founded an order of nuns, the Sisters of Charity of Our Lady of Mercy.

St. Mary's Church (established 1789) on Hasell Street and the Cathedral of St. Finbar (established 1821) on Broad Street were the first two Catholic churches in Charleston. Because Catholics who lived outside the city limits had to walk a considerable distance to receive the sacraments, they requested another church in the Neck area. A group of about 50 black and white Catholics met in 1837 to form the new parish of St. Patrick's Church on the corner of St. Philip and Radcliffe Streets. At the blessing of the new edifice, after Bishop John England had preached, the black parishioners remained to sing hymns and offer their prayers for the occasion.⁵

The colonial prejudice against Catholics did not disappear in the early decades of the new Republic. If anything, anti-Catholic sentiment intensified in the years following the Revolution. Combating hostility to the faith, winning converts, and ministering to his small flock of black and white Catholics thoroughly occupied Bishop England. In the summer of 1835 he opened a

school for free blacks in Charleston. Taught by two seminarians and two nuns, the school quickly enrolled eighty students within a few weeks. Pro slavery Charlestonians, however, threatened to lynch the Bishop if he did not close his school. England saw the situation as a threat to Catholics as well as to blacks. After a two day standoff, he reluctantly agreed to close the school on condition that all religious schools for free blacks close as well as his Catholic school. England feared the anti-abolitionist, who were also anti-Catholic, would do harm to other nascent Catholic institutions in South Carolina. England vowed he would reopen the school when the political climate cooled.⁶ Of course, the climate did not cool until after the Civil War. The school may have been short-lived, but John England's desire to minister to all of His flock was undimmed.

BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR

In ante-bellum South Carolina there were many constraints to ministering the black Catholics, the most important of which was the opposition of whites to evangelization. Whites feared that blacks who read the Bible would also read newspapers and contraband antislavery literature. Another constraint was the paucity of priests and the great distances they had to travel. The few Catholics outside Charleston or Columbia, the state's capital, black or white, encountered a priest only once or twice a year, if then. This iso-

lation forced Catholics to rely on each other to keep the faith alive. Some Catholic plantation owners instructed their slaves in the catechism and conducted regular religious services in the absences of clergy and formal churches. One example of this lay evangelization was Natalie Delage Sumter, the French and Catholic wife of Thomas Sumter, Jr. She felt it was her duty to instruct her household in Catholic practices. She felt the spiritual health of her slaves was as important as their physical health. She held class every Sunday afternoon. In her diary, she wrote, "I had 22 Negroes for catechism and spoke to the old Negroes, laid down for an hour and sent them home with a good dinner."⁷ Natalie used the catechism John England wrote for the religious instruction of all Catholics of the diocese.

Bishop Patrick Lynch, third bishop of Charleston, was a slave owner. He defended slavery, as did every other Southern bishop, but he did not consider it to be a "positive good," in the language of other apologists, for the institution. Lynch insisted that masters, including himself, had grave responsibilities with respect to humane treatment and conscientious religious instruction of their slaves. Although adult slaves were free to practice whatever religion they preferred, he said Catholic slave owners were bound in charity to baptize slave children and instruct them in the catechism, a plan he followed himself.⁸ In 1866 Bishop Lynch purchased what had

been a Jewish Synagogue on Wentworth Street, Charleston, and there he established St. Peter's Church as the first parish for the newly emancipated black Catholics. St. Peter's was dedicated in January 1869.⁹ During the dedication sermon, Bishop Lynch noted that his predecessor, Bishop Ignatius A. Reynolds, had proposed a parish for blacks in the 1850s but lack of money prevented it.¹⁰

CIVIL WAR AFTERMATH

Indeed, lack of money hampered many of the bishop's plans. After the ravages of war and the 1861 fire, the Diocese of Charleston was deeply in debt. The people and the parishes were desperately poor. In spite of this, Pope Pius IX required positive measures on behalf of newly emancipated blacks. The Josephites took up the apostolate to African Americans in the 1870s. In 1874 the fathers had charge of St. Peter's in Charleston, but a shortage of personnel forced them to abandon the ministry after a few years. Another religious order, the Pious Society of the Mission took over St. Peter's in late 1892. Bishop Henry P. Northrop assigned all ministry among black Catholics to this order.

THE VATICAN AND RACISM

Throughout the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, the Popes spoke against slavery, the slave trade, and the neglected condition of African Americans. In 1839 Pope Gregory XVI con-

The History of Black Catholics in the Diocese of Charleston

demned the slave trade. In 1884 the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith, charged with coordinating and directing all missionary activity in the world, insisted American bishops address the "Negro problem." In 1903 the Propagation pointed out the inertia of American bishops on the issue, and in 1904 Pope Pius X promised prompt action on behalf of American blacks. Throughout these decades the Holy See maintained pressure on American bishops to demonstrate better efforts to minister to blacks. By 1920 Pope Benedict XV requested a native clergy and in 1926 Pope Pius XI repeated the request in his encyclical, *Rerum Ecclesiae*.¹¹

Parallel to the pressure from Rome for black priests and greater ministry to blacks, black laity increasingly insisted on their right to participate in the Catholic church. Black Catholics found a voice in the decades after Civil War and Reconstruction. James Spencer, for example, was a free black before the Civil War and a member of the Reconstruction legislature from Abbeville.¹² Spencer was a vestry man at St. Peter's in Charleston and, like his father James Spencer, Sr., a prominent leader in the black Catholic community in Charleston. The younger Spencer played a significant part in the history of black Catholics in the United States when he presided over the fourth meeting of the Congress of Colored Catholics in Chicago in 1893. In a speech there, Spencer addressed the question of separate

parishes for people of different nationalities. All should have access to the church, he asserted, and the church should be open to the needs and wishes of each. Thus the bishops should establish national parishes in order to encourage diverse national groups, but separate churches for blacks should not be a pretext for discrimination and segregation.¹³

TWENTIETH CENTURY

Although restrictive laws and social pressures continued to handicap blacks in the early decades of the twentieth century, an era of lynching and fierce discrimination, black Catholic laymen pressed for their own priests and parishes. By 1920 only nine black priests had been ordained in all the United States of America.¹⁴ Those numbers grew slowly, but black parishes, even in South Carolina, were somewhat easier to come by. On April 11, 1880, Immaculate Conception Chapel, Charleston, was dedicated by Bishop Lynch, becoming the second black parish. The chapel was built on one of six lots purchased by the diocese in 1843, "to be held in trust for the use of the colored Roman Catholic population of the City of Charleston...as a cemetery or Burial ground for the said colored Slaves or free...".¹⁵ This parish, comprising the chapel, Immaculate Conception School, and the St. John's Cemetery, was staffed by the Holy Ghost Fathers, another religious order dedicated to ministering to African Americans. By the 1930s the black Catholic

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community of Columbia had grown to such an extent that in 1935 Bishop Emmet M. Walsh established Blessed Martin de Porres Parish near Benedict College and Allen University, historically black colleges. This parish was staffed by the Order of Preachers, popularly known as Dominican priests. The Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa began the school shortly thereafter.

On the national level there were many Catholics active in the interracial movement. The Jesuit Fr. John La Farge, for example, worked tirelessly for that goal.¹⁶ Pope Pius XII continued to call for evangelization of Blacks and it is clear the bishops and laity in South Carolina were responding to the appeal. In 1939 the pontiff reaffirmed his affection for blacks in the encyclical *Sertum Laetitiae*. In that same year the Oblates of Mary Immaculate opened a mission for black Catholics in Sumter. By 1941 this mission became the parish of St. Jude. In the same year, St. Ann's, a parish for black Catholics in Florence was ready.

By 1943 American Catholic bishops emphasized in a pastoral letter the obligation to recognize the political, educational, economic, and social rights of blacks.¹⁷ Black parishes and missions continued to grow in the Palmetto state as a result of the encouragement of the Holy See and the growing numbers of black Catholics. By the end of the 1940s there were also churches for

blacks in Kingstree, Orangeburg, Rock Hill, Greenville, Anderson and Aiken and other places.

INTEGRATION

The push for integration advanced on many fronts in the decades after World War II.

Against great odds, American Catholic bishops worked hard to improve race relations. In South Carolina, the bishop and the clergy fought for racial justice in a difficult political climate. Father Joseph Bernardin, as Chancellor of the Diocese of Charleston (later to become Archbishop for Chicago), noted that it was a challenge for the church to put those principles of racial justice into practice in South Carolina. "With complete racial justice as our ideal, we shall prudently, but firmly, work toward the accomplishment of this ideal.¹⁸ Bernardin acknowledged that school integration was slow. In 1961 Bishop Paul J. Hallinan addressed the school desegregation issue in his lenten pastoral letter in which he stated that Catholic students, regardless of color, would be admitted to Catholic schools as soon as it could be done safely.¹⁹ Bishop Hallinan was criticized in the national press for his efforts.

When Bishop Ernest Unterkoefler took office he made changes that affected black Catholics. In Charleston he merged St. Peter's Church with St. Patrick's in 1967. Father Egbert Figaro of St. Patrick's became the first black priest in the dio-

The History of Black Catholics in the Diocese of Charleston

cese.²⁰ The bishop integrated Immaculate Conception School and Bishop England High School in 1968. The 1969 graduating class was the first integrated class at the high school. In Orangeburg, Holy Trinity and Christ Our King merged in 1967.

FIGHT FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

The 1969 Charleston hospital strike became an important test for social justice issues in South Carolina. The strike began with hospital workers at the teaching hospital at the Medical University of South Carolina on March 20, 1969. Hospital workers at the Charleston County Hospital struck as well. The workers insisted on their right to organize for better pay and work conditions. The Medical University, a state institution, insisted it did not have the authority to bargain with a union. Most of the striking hospital workers were poorly paid black nonprofessional personnel. National union organizers quickly joined the protest, as did Ralph Abernathy of Southern Christian Leadership Council. The volatile local crisis was exacerbated by the nationwide riots, assassinations and protests. Governor Robert McNair called in National Guard troops to keep order. A curfew was in force. After a month of standoff, a Concerned Clergy Committee, formed by leading ministers of Charleston, including Catholic priests, offered to mediate. Bishop Unterkoefer, against considerable opposition, maintained the Catholic

church's position that laboring people have a right to organize and should be encouraged to do so. To the clergy and the strikers involved, the struggle was an important social justice issue.

After 100 days the strike at the Medical University Hospital ended. After 113 days, the strike against the Charleston County Hospital ended. In the end the striking workers won the right to a workable grievance procedure and better personnel policies. Most were rehired by their respective institutions. A similarly important result may have been the prominent stand Bishop Ernest L. Unterkoefler took in favor of social justice.

Bishop David B. Thompson's recent episcopacy, 1990-1999, is already recognized as an era of building bridges of unity. He was among the leaders who successfully advocated furling the Confederate flag atop the South Carolina Statehouse. Bishop Thompson also served on the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on African American Catholics.

TODAY

During his continuing conversation with Catholics of African heritage, Bishop Robert J. Baker called for immediate action in developing a history of the Diocese of Charleston's African American parishes. This essay is one small step in that direction.

The History of Black Catholics in the Diocese of Charleston

Today the Diocese of Charleston has an Office of Ethnic Affairs, established in 2002 by Bishop Baker and headed by Kathleen Merritt.

ITS MISSION STATEMENT:

The Office of Ethnic Ministries is committed to organizing ways for the church as a whole to celebrate its ethnic diversity and recognize that diversity as a strength of the church. We are focused on bridging the gap between those in the mainstream culture and those who feel marginalized from the church because of ethnic or cultural division.

It stands as an example of the firm commitment of the Catholic Diocese of Charleston to principles and practice of social justice in South Carolina today.

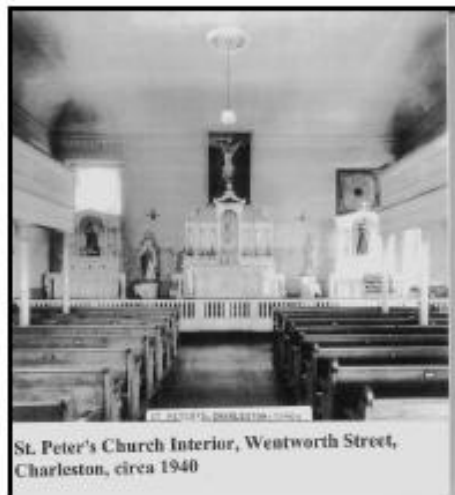
A PICTORIAL EXHIBIT

A pictorial exhibit of the History of Black Catholics in the Diocese of Charleston is available for check out through the Diocesan Office of Ethnic Ministries. Pages 47-51 are a few of the pictures from that exhibit. For more information on Black Catholics in the Diocese of Charleston, please visit the website at www.sccatholic.org/ethnic-ministries or like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/BlackCatholicinCharleston.

The History of Black Catholics in the Diocese of Charleston



St. Peter's School, 65 Society Street, Charleston, circa 1930.



St. Peter's Church Interior, Westworth Street, Charleston, circa 1940



**First Graders, at St. Anthony's School,
Greenville, 1975**



**Blessing of St. Martin de Porres Mission Church and School,
Columbia, 1954**

The History of Black Catholics in the Diocese of Charleston



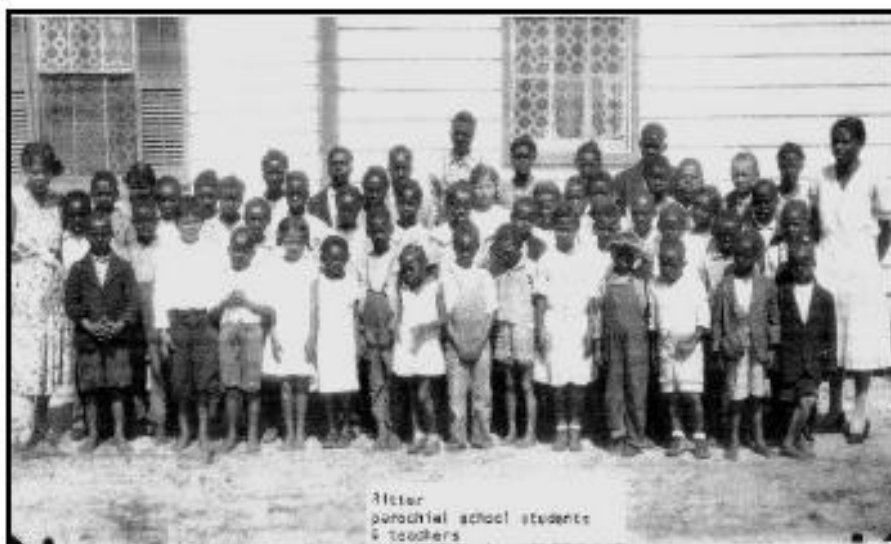
The Oblate Sisters of Providence at Their Convent, 51 Society Street, Charleston, ca. 1930



Ms. Florence Kaster and a van load of students, Williamsburg County, circa 1978

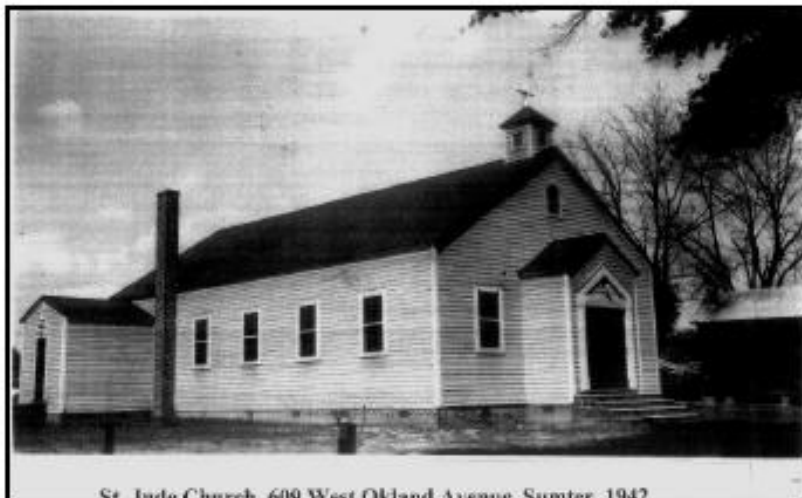


Sister Marjorie Lupien, R.S.M. with first and second graders at St. Joseph School, Walterboro, 1970



Parochial School Students and Two Teachers at St. James the Greater, Ritter, no date

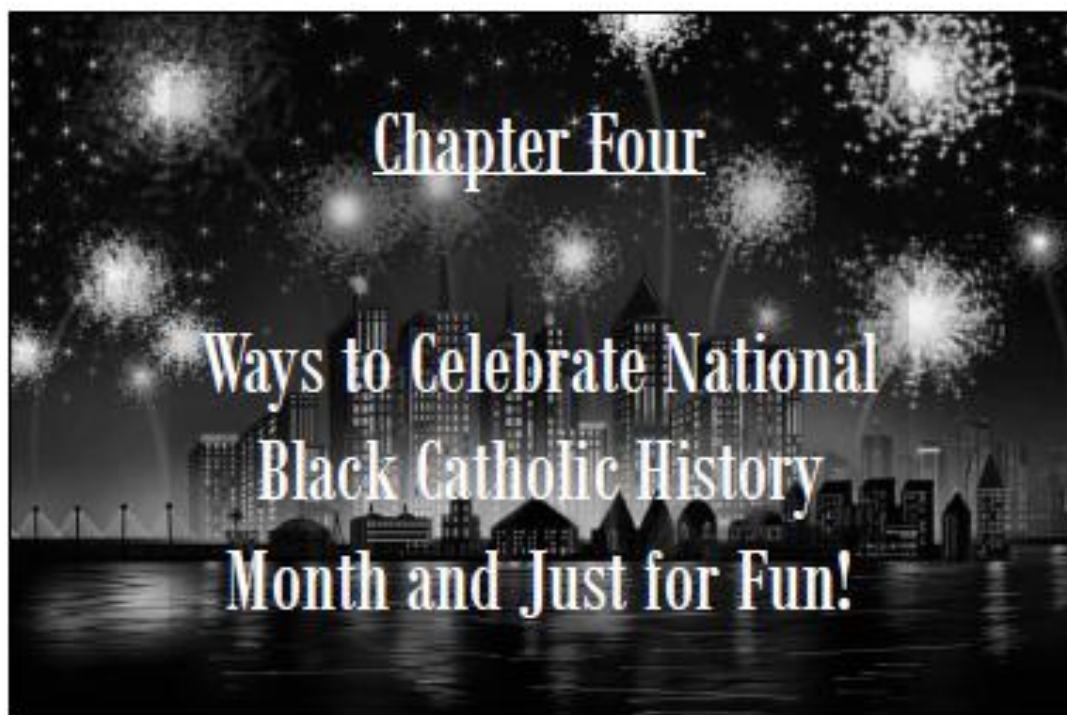
The History of Black Catholics in the Diocese of Charleston



St. Jude Church, 609 West Oakland Avenue, Sumter, 1942



"Colored Week" at the South Carolina State Fair, 1954



In this chapter, are suggestions on how you can celebrate Black Catholic History Month in and outside of the church, with other people, or in the comfort of your own home. It doesn't matter where or how you celebrate, just as long as you celebrate.

Ways to Celebrate

THE AFTER MASS SOCIAL

After Sunday Mass is an excellent time to host a social gathering to pass the history on. Choose a theme and invite a guest speaker. You can even prepare a media or written document on Black Catholic History, highlighting the contributions of Black Catholics in your parish, diocese or across the U.S. Make the presentation available electronically or by paper copies.

PASS IT ON AT A CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Plan and/or present a presentation or activity such as a “Knowledge Bowl” for a Catholic School, Bible Study Class, or CCD Class. The questions noted on the “Just for Fun” page is a good start.

RAISE FUNDS FOR A WORTHY CAUSE

Plan a luncheon or evening event to honor or acknowledge the gifts of a Black Catholic history maker who is still alive. Sell tickets to the event and donate the proceeds to one of the worthy causes of the Church, parish or Catholic school in the Black community. Share the history of Black Catholics at the celebration and make this a yearly event.

Just for Fun!

QUIZ

Circle the correct answer

1. Who is the author of the book, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States*?
A. Pierre Toussaint B. Thea Bowman C. Cyprian Davis
2. What was the name of the first Black religious order in the United States?
A. Oblate Sisters of Providence B. Sisters of the Holy Family
3. In 1693, Spain offered freedom to any slave who converted to Catholicism in what state?
A. South Carolina B. Maryland C. Florida
4. Which of the following was one of the founders of the Sisters of the Holy Family religious order?
A. Katherine Drexel B. Henriette Delille C. Thea Bowman
5. The Society of the Devine Word is best known for what contribution to the history of Black Catholics?
A. Establishing the Black Catholic Clergy B. Beginning the first Black seminary for candidates to the priesthood
C. Nothing
6. The National Black Catholic Congress VI took place in what city?
A. New Orleans, LA B. Washington, D.C. C. Rome, Italy

(Answers are located on Pg. 57)

Just for Fun!

True or False

Circle the correct answer

1. St. Josephine Bakhita was renamed Bakhita because she forgot her own name.
T F
2. When Bakhita became of age while serving as a servant in Italy, by law she became a free woman.
T F
3. St. Monica is the mother of St. Martin de Porres.
T F
4. St. Monica is the patron saint for abused victims.
T F
5. St. Augustine's mother prayed that her son would make better grades while in Carthage.
T F
6. James Augustine Healy became the first Black bishop in the United States in 1875.
T F
7. Augustus Tolton was ordained a priest in Rome because he could not prove his citizenship in the United States.
T F

Just for Fun!

Matching

Draw a line from the column on the left to the matching words in the right column.

Parallel to Knights of Columbus

Thea Bowman

African Popes

Knights of Peter Claver

Foundation for Indian and Colored

St. James in Ritter, SC

Past President of Georgetown University

Harold Perry, SVD

The Handmaids of Mary

Charleston hospital strike

Second Black Religious Order

Sisters of the Holy Family

2nd Black Bishop in the U.S

Saints Victor, Miltiades, Gelasius

Practiced Catholicism without a priest

Savannah, Ga

1969 South Carolina social justice issue

Fr. Francis Patrick Healy

Addressed the Catholic Bishops in 1989

Katherine Drexel

Prayed for her son's conversion for 17 years

Saint Monica

On the road to sainthood

Toussaint, Lange, Delille, Tolton

Just for Fun!

ANSWERS

QUIZ

1C, 2A, 3C, 4B, 5B, 6B

TRUE OR FALSE

1. True 2. True 3. False 4. True 5. False 6. True 7. False

MATCHING

Parallel to Knights of Columbus/Knights of Peter Claver

African Popes/ Saints Victor, Miltiades, Gelasius

Foundation for Indian and Colored/Katherine Drexel

Past President of Georgetown University/Fr. Francis Patrick Healy

Handmaids of Mary/Savannah, GA

Second Black Religious Order/Sisters of the Holy Family

Second Black Bishop in the U.S./Harold Perry, SVD

Practiced Catholicism without a priest/St. James in Ritter, SC

1969 South Carolina Social Justice Issue/Charleston's hospital strike

Addressed the Catholic Bishops in 1989/Thea Bowman

Prayed for her son's conversion for 17 years/St. Monica

On the road to sainthood/Toussaint, Lange, Delille, Tolton

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Office of Ethnic Ministries

<http://www.sccatholic.org/ethnic-ministries>