



African American Affairs Ministry Diocese of Charlotte

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Vol. I

## **Black Catholic History Month** *Authentically Black and Truly Catholic*

The story of Black Catholics in the United States is about communities tenaciously sustaining faith amidst great hardship. Black Catholics have fought for acceptance within their own Church, and within the country for generations and in the process, have transformed what it means to be *“Authentically Black and Truly Catholic”*



Mary Elizabeth Lange, OSP  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mother\\_Mary\\_Lange.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mother_Mary_Lange.jpg)

The fight for survival and acceptance of Black Catholicism can be traced to 1829 when four black women under the

leadership of Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange formed the Oblate Sisters of Providence in Baltimore. The Oblate Sisters, against terrific odds began the instruction of black children in Baltimore. The work of the Oblate Sisters and a second group of black sisters in Louisiana, the Sisters of the Holy Family, are a reminder that even in the period of slavery the black Catholic community took a leading role in its own evangelization and education.



Courtesy of the National Black Catholic Congress

After the Civil War, black Catholics sought to form a national organization in order to coordinate their efforts for more Catholic schools and to address racial

discrimination at the parish level. This effort was spearheaded by Daniel Rudd. In 1889 he began the first black Catholic newspaper, the American Catholic Tribune, first in Cincinnati and then in Detroit. Not only was he publishing almost singlehandedly a circulation of almost 10,000, he also began a series of Catholic Afro-American congresses, which met for the first time in Washington, D.C., in 1889.



Colored Catholic Congress  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1892\\_Colored\\_Catholic\\_Congress.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1892_Colored_Catholic_Congress.jpg)

In 1924 Dr. Thomas Wyatt Turner established the Federated Colored Catholics in the United States. It was composed of lay leaders from the black Catholic community, and was both a continuation of the work of Daniel Rudd and a

forerunner of the black civil rights organizations of the 1960's .

Dr. Turner saw the need for black Catholics to be the leaders in their own leadership and development; a concept that would become the position of many black Catholics at the end of the 1960's. The black Catholics who formed the Black Catholic Clergy Caucus, the Black Sisters Conference in 1968 and the National Office for Black Catholics in 1970 are the lineal descendants of the black consciousness of Dr. Turner and of Mr. Rudd. They denounced the “racism found in our society and within our Church,” declaring it “to be categorically evil and detrimental to the freedom of all men everywhere, and particularly destructive of Black people in America.” The sisters pledged themselves “to work unceasingly for the liberation of black people” by promoting “a positive self-image and stimulating “community action aimed at the achievement of social, political, and economic black power.”

*Cont....pg 2*

# Black Catholic History Month Cont...

The Black Power movement inspired black Catholics to ultimately charge their Church with being a “white racist institution.” Alliances with local black Protestant leaders and black activists resulted in liturgical celebrations known as Black Unity Mass, where black priests donned Afrocentric vestments, decorated the altar similarly, and celebrated the Mass with a decidedly “black” liturgical flair. Ultimately, gospel and jazz music, West African drumming and dance, and black Protestant preaching styles all found their way into Catholic Masses. The Second Vatican Council provided another opportunity, to solidify Black Catholic worship, as Church leaders from around the world, opened the doors to sweeping changes not just in Catholic worship but also in the ways in which Catholics engaged the modern world.

In 1984 10 black bishops of the United States declared that the black Catholic community in the United States had “come of age.” After years of activism, scholarship, and struggle, it was finally possible for black Catholics to be, in their words, both “*Authentically Black*” and “*Truly Catholic*.”

Still, the black Catholic community has been a microcosm of the Catholic Church in America. There are no black American saints, but there are saintly black Catholics like **Pierre Toussaint**, who walked the streets of old New York in the first part of the 19th century dispensing charity and practicing the works of mercy despite his own poverty. **Venerable Augustus Tolton**, the first U.S. Roman Catholic priest publicly known to be black. **Sister Thea Bowman** who was instrumental in the creation of many Catholic multicultural and African American projects such as the first edition of “Lead Me, Guide Me,” an African American Catholic hymnal. She co-founded the Institute for Black Catholic Studies at Xavier University, and she helped found the National Black Sisters Conference in 1966 . **Julia Greeley**, Denver’s Angel of Charity spent her life collecting food, clothing, and other goods for the poor and **Venerable Henriette Delille** founded the Sisters of the Holy Family in 1836 and served as their first Mother Superior. The sisters are the second oldest surviving congregation of African American nuns.

***Truly, it is because of the existence of the black community within the Catholic Church from the very beginning that the history of the Catholic Church in this country is unique***



Venerable Henriette Delille  
<https://www.sistersoftheholysfamily.com/>



Julia Greeley  
<https://inliagreeley.org/>



Venerable Fr. Augustus Tolton  
[Home - Augustus Tolton](#)



Sister Thea Bowman  
<https://www.sistertheabowman.com/>



Venerable Pierre Toussaint  
[Venerable Pierre Toussaint | Archdiocese of New York \(archny.org\)](https://www.archdioceseofnewyork.org/)

## Sources

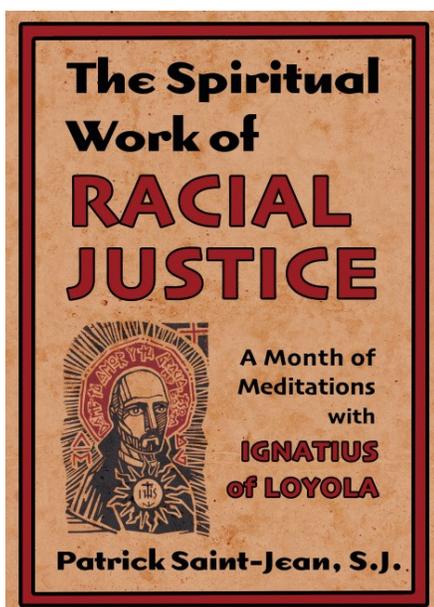
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- ⇒ <https://formationreimagined.org/black-catholic-history-month/>
- ⇒ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black\\_Catholicism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Catholicism)

# ***The Spiritual Work of Racial Justice: A Month of Meditations with Ignatius of Loyola***

by [Patrick Saint-Jean, S.J.](#) (Author)

*Patrick Saint-Jean, S.J. designed the book to lead the reader through a month-long Ignatian “retreat,” focusing on racial justice, following the format of St. Ignatius’ Spiritual Exercises. The book provides a guide for the ways in which Ignatian spirituality offers us tools for today’s antiracist struggle, both spiritual and practical.*

Below is an interview with the Saint- Jean and the Ignatian Solidarity Network  
By ISN STAFF | *September 2, 2021*



**Can you share why you wrote this book—and particularly why you wrote this book now, in this moment?**

The sin of racism has always existed in America, but the past two years have made this sin more evident to me than ever before and has challenged each one of us to engage in a deep process of conversion. This year, we are also celebrating the 500 years of the conversion of St. Ignatius of Loyola and I found within myself the spiritual obligation to engage in this conversation through this spiritual conversion lens for God’s glory. I believe that through Ignatius, God has invited me to encounter Him and invite others to meet Him as well on this issue in whatever way we can—and this book is just one of the ways. Albeit, let me quickly say that, this is not just me. I believe that it is for all of us, if only we can see it or if *we choose to see it*

**Why Ignatian spirituality and racial justice? Tell us about how these two interweave with one another.**

St. Ignatius of Loyola teaches us to *see God in all things*. This means that each area of injustice in our world is also a call from God. Ignatian spirituality is very practical, combining the physical and spiritual worlds into one interwoven reality. This means we cannot draw close to God spiritually if we are ignoring the injustice in the world. The Spiritual Exercises that St. Ignatius left us can be applied directly to the situations created by racism, and this is what I show in my book. I have humbly come to believe that it is inconceivable to live a life of faith, love, and charity without Justice. While love, faith, and charity can be the motive of our action, Justice remains the pillar that informs them. Indeed, there can be none of those without Justice.

See the full interview here: <https://ignatiansolidarity.net/blog/2021/09/02/spiritual-work-of-racial-justice/>

# Sister Thea Bowman *a cause for Canonization*



In honor of Black Catholic History Month, the Racial and Ethnic Equity Ministry of St. Eugene Catholic Church will be hosting an adult education program outlining the life and the cause for canonization of Sr. Thea Bowman, one of six Black American Catholics on the path to sainthood.

The program will be held  
**Sunday November 13, 2022 at 10:15am** in the Social Hall  
There is no cost to attend



St. Eugene Catholic Church  
72 Culvern Street  
Asheville, NC 28804  
<https://www.steugene.org/>

# Holy Hour for Racial Healing



November is Black Catholic History Month when we take time to recognize the unique contributions and struggles of our black and brown brothers and sisters. In addition to celebrating the beautiful culture, gifts and talents of the black community, we also acknowledge the reality of racism and its long-standing effects on the black community.

Please join us for a Holy Hour for Racial Healing on  
**Sunday, November 13, 2022 10:15- 11:15 a.m.**

Sponsored by St Peter Catholic Church, Social Justice Ministry.

Deacon Clarke Cochran will preside

All are welcome

St Peter Catholic Church

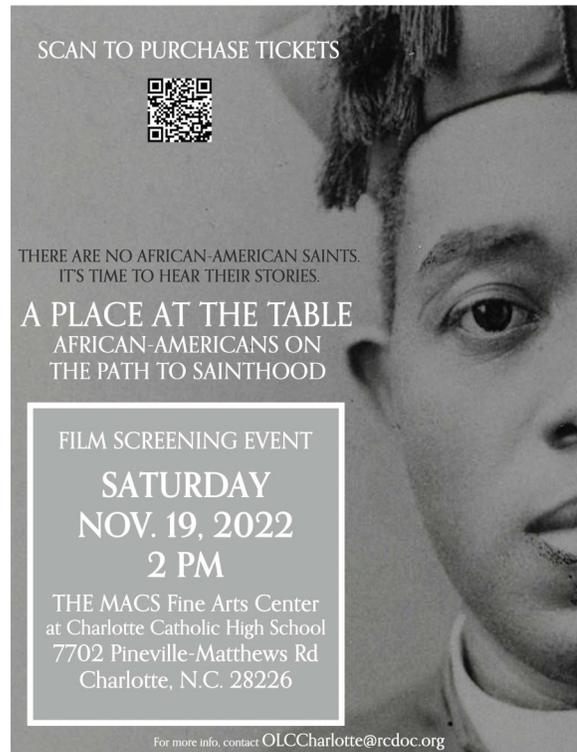
507 S Tryon St,

Charlotte, NC 28202

<https://www.stpeterscatholic.org/>

# A Place At The Table

## African Americans on the Path to Sainthood



Our Lady of Consolation Church is hosting a film screening for the entire Diocese of Charlotte as it celebrates its 50th anniversary

There are six incredible Black men and women who are on the path to Canonization. The Catholic Church is starting to recognize their impact and may soon name any or all of them Saints.

It's time to hear their stories.

**Sat, Nov 19, 2022, 2:00pm EST**



The MACS Fine Arts Center  
Charlotte Catholic High School  
7702 Pineville-Matthews Road  
Charlotte, NC 28226

Tickets <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/422631681737>

# “My AHA Moment”

*My moment of personal realization that there are systemic inequalities between minority and non-minority communities*



A discussion on how positions of privilege have been advantageous, what is being done to make a change and how non minorities can truly be racial advocates.

**Tuesday November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022**  
**7:00pm EST**

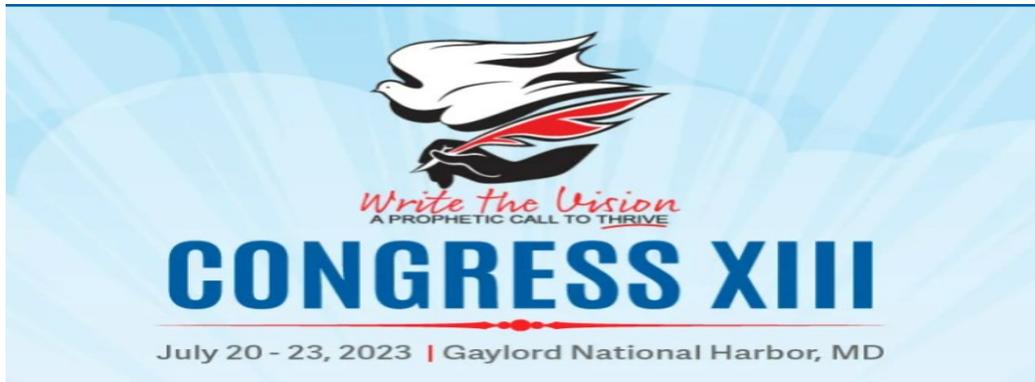
Presented by:  
The African American Affairs Ministry, Diocese of Charlotte and  
the Sisters of Mercy

**Registration and Webinar link coming soon**

Questions: Contact  
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African American Affairs Ministry  
Diocese of Charlotte



## *Write the Vision: A Prophetic Call to Thrive*

The National Black Catholic Congress (NBCC) convenes a national congress every five years.

Each one renews and develops our mission with a Pastoral Plan.

The next congress will be held **July 20-23, 2023**, at the Gaylord National Harbor, Maryland

Join with other Black Catholics and those who minister to Black Catholics in the United States for a celebration of our faith and culture.

**Congress XIII News:  
REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN!**

Click the link for more information and to register:

<https://www.nbccgathering2023.org/>



## Useful Resources

- ◇ Catholic Podcasts - <https://nbccongress.org/podcasts/>
- ◇ Catholic Apps - <https://www.nbccongress.org/catholic-apps.html>
- ◇ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops - [United States Conference of Catholic Bishops \(usccb.org\)](https://www.usccb.org/)
- ◇ USCCB Committees Cultural Diversity in the Church - [Cultural Diversity in the Church | USCCB](https://www.usccb.org/committees/cultural-diversity-in-the-church/)
- ◇ The National Black Catholic Congress—<https://nbccongress.org/>
- ◇ National Black Catholic Congress Latest News— <https://nbccongress.org/latest-news/>
- ◇ [National Black Catholic Congress – Congress XIII](https://www.nbccongress.org/)
- \* Registration and Information - <https://www.nbccgathering2023.org/>
- \* Venue & Travel Information - <https://www.nbccgathering2023.org/Venue-&-Travel>

***Spiritual Enlightenment  
Outreach***

***Awareness  
Evangelization***



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**<https://charlottediocese.org/african-american-affairs-ministry/>**