

TIMELY TOPICS



DIOCESE OF COLUMBUS, OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND CATECHESIS

Black Catholic History

Each year in February we are reminded of the history and contributions of Black Americans. For us, it also is a time to be aware of the history and gifts of our black brothers and sisters in the Catholic Church in America. Black Catholics are not newcomers to the Church.

We often forget that Christianity did not originate in Europe. You may be surprised to learn that Black Catholic History began in the Acts of the Apostles (8: 26-40) with the conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch by Philip the Deacon.

Three Popes have been born in Africa: Saints Victor I, Melchiades, and Gelasius I. Many saints were black: Saints Cyprian, Zeno, Anthony of Egypt, Moses the Black, Pachomius, Maurice, Athanasius, Pisentius, Mary of Egypt, Cyril of Alexandria, Monica of Hippo, Augustine of Hippo, Perpetua, Felicitas, and St. Martin DePorres. Black Catholics have played a major part in the history and development of our Church, e.g., St. Augustine's *Summa Theologica* (St. Augustine is considered the first black doctor of the Church).

Many Black Catholics have devoted their lives to their Catholic faith – indeed, many have given their lives for their faith. Below are links to some notable Black Catholics.

[Faithful Catholics of the African Diaspora](#) who have been canonized.

[Jean Baptiste Pointe du Sable](#)

[Daniel A. Rudd](#)

[Pierre Toussaint](#)

[Mother Henriette Delille](#)

[Mother Mary Lange](#)

[Father Cyprian Davis](#)

[Fr. Augustine Tolton](#)

[Pope St. Victor 189-198 AD](#)

[Pope St. Miltiades 310-314 AD](#)

[Pope St. Gelasius I 492-496 AD](#)

[St. Josephine Bakhita](#)

[African Saints](#)

Black Catholics have been a part of American history since at least 1565. For a

brief history of Black Catholics in America see the following, which is adapted from [A Brief History of African American](#)

[Catholics](#) by Fr. Cyprian Davis, OSB.

Sr. Jaime Phelps OP, director of the Institute for Black Catholic Studies, Xavier University, New Orleans, reflects on Black Catholics in the US in her October 26, 2011 article [African-American Catholics: Story of an uncommon fidelity.](#)

Black people share a kind of “sacred culture.” Spirituals and Gospel Music permeate Black culture. Black Catholics

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more commonly feel free to express and inquire about religious matters – whether in church or in a secular setting. This shared “sacred culture” finds a vibrant expression in the Mass in the form of Gospel music, joyful exuberance, “call and response”, lively interaction with the preaching through verbal affirmations, applause and raised hands. The revisions in the Mass after Vatican II opened the door for many cultures to be more integrated into the Eucharistic celebration.

On September 9, 1984 the 10 Black Bishops of the United States published a Pastoral Letter on Evangelization, [What We Have Seen and Heard](#), as a witness to the Black community. The Bishops sought to explain that evangelization is both a call and a response. This means not only preaching but also witnessing. The first part of the document is about the shared gifts rooted in the African heritage. Part two highlights some obstacles to evangelization.✿



In-Service

Needs: an electronic copy of this *Timely Topics* and [Media Bytes on Black History](#)

- ☞ 1 week before date of in-service
 - Choose a resource from the list or links listed here on in the [Media Bytes on Black History](#)
 - Determine how that resource/information can be used in religion across the curriculum
 - Write a brief outline of how to use the resource in your classroom with the subject you teach
- ☞ In-service Meeting
 - Share resource and how you would use in your classroom
 - Discuss if resource could be used in other subject areas
 - Close with prayer below. Think of how alike we all are and that we are all God’s children.

February 5, 2012

Prayer composed by Fr. Jim Goode, OFM,

who in 1989 founded the National Day of Prayer for the African American Family.

God of Mercy and Love, we place our families before you today. May we be proud of our history and never forget those who paid so great a price for our liberation. Bless us one by one and keep our hearts and minds fixed on higher ground. Help us to live for You and not for ourselves, and may we cherish and proclaim the gift of life. Bless our parents, guardians and grandparents, relatives and friends. Give us the amazing grace to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Help us, as Your children, to live in such a way that the beauty and greatness of authentic love is reflected in all that we say and do. Give a healing anointing to those less fortunate, especially the motherless, the fatherless, the broken, the sick and the lonely. Bless our departed family members and friends. May they be led into the light of your dwelling place where we will never grow old, where we will share the fullness of redemption and shout the victory for all eternity. This we ask in the precious name of Jesus, our Savior and Blessed Assurance. Amen. Holy Mary, Mother of Our Families, pray for us. Amen.

The prayers we offer for our families, we offer for all families of every race and nation.

Amen.

Ideas for All Ages

Adults/RCIA/Teens

- ☞ Read articles from links in this publication or view videos on Black Catholic History. Tell the story of Black Catholics in America using oral or visual arts presentations, e.g., music, essays, plays, skits, posters, rap, poems, etc.
- ☞ View *Enduring Faith* video. Prejudice is often not easy to identify. Where do you see prejudice in your parish, school, work environment, community? How can you try to overcome racial prejudice?
- ☞ Read the Pastoral Letter [What We Have Seen and Heard](#) or view *Fire in the Pews: "What We Have Seen and Heard,"* Part One – The Gifts we Share. Take a gift from Part I and compare and contrast how the Black Catholic viewpoint may differ from your own culture
- ☞ Read the Pastoral Letter [What We Have Seen and Heard](#) or view *Fire in the Pews: "What We Have Seen and Heard,"* Part Two, The Call of God to His People, discuss how can we help realize this call
- ☞ Attend an Eucharistic Liturgy in a predominately Black parish. How is the Black Catholic culture and spirituality expressed and incorporated within the larger church?

Adults/RCIA/Teens/Young Children

- ☞ Exhibit symbols that reflect African-American Culture: Pictures, religious symbols, kente cloth, Bible enthronements, e.g.: [Jesus Mafa](#) (posters of Black Biblical Scenes)
- ☞ Highlight Black Catholic Role Models such as [Sr. Thea Bowman](#), [Fr. Augustus Tolton](#), saints, local people. Choose a role model. Tell their story using oral or visual presentations, e.g. music, essays, plays, skits, posters, rap, poems, etc.
- ☞ Invite Black Catholic priests, sisters, deacons and lay leaders to speak about their experience of "church."
- ☞ Recite/Create a Prayer for various Black Saints

Resources

Links to websites of interest to Black Catholics: [Websites of Interest to Black Catholics](#)

Available from Office of Religious Education and Catechesis

VTE 1916	<i>Somebody's Callin' My Name</i> African-American sisters, brothers, priests serving the church Gr. 9-12, Adult
VTE 2405	<i>The Cypress Will Grow</i> African-American Catholic experience Gr. 9-12, Adult
VTE 2460	<i>Fire in the Pews: "What We Have Seen and Heard"</i> Based on Black Catholic bishops' pastoral Gr. 9-12, Adult

[Media Bytes – Black History](#)

Davis, Cyprian. *The History of Black Catholics in the United States*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1990. (BK MCB DAVIC 1990)

Lincoln, C. Eric, ed. *The Black Experience in Religion: A Book of Readings*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1974. (BK MCB LINCE 1974)



Diocesan Events

February 4, 2012, 8:30 am, Day of Reflection for Congress XI—*St. Dominic Center*

February 5, 2012, 4:00 pm, African American Family Day of Prayer—*St. Thomas*

February 11, 2012, 10:00 am, Black History Collectors & Memorabilia Fair
Martin de Porres Center

February 19, 2012, 1:00 pm, Honoring our Elders (70 & Older)
St. Dominic with Program Luncheon

For more information please call Black Catholic Ministries at 614-228-0024.

Correlation to the Graded Course of Study & National Standards

Religion Graded Course of Study

Content Standard III: Discover, recognize, and participate in the life of the church through prayer, liturgy and sacraments

Content Standard IV: Discover and recognize the development of the Christian person and experience the baptismal call to dignity, relationship, moral decision-making and service.

National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers

Standard I: Personal and Spiritual Maturity

- Core Competency 1.6: Relate respectfully with a diversity of persons, age groups, and cultures
- Specialized Competency 1.9 PCL: Recognize God's activity in personal life experiences and articulate this understanding with others

Standard 3: Catholic Theology

- Core Competency 3.3.5: Articulating the vision for the inculturation of the Gospel and the new evangelization as expressed in current church documents
- Core Competency 3.6.1: Articulating pastoral responses that invite the community into discipleship and witness according to the pastoral needs of people from various cultures
- Core Competency 3.8.1: Integrating into ministry an understanding and appreciation of diverse forms and multi-cultural expressions of individual and communal Catholic spirituality and prayer

Standard 4: Pastoral Praxis

- Core Competency 4.3: Understand and appreciate the gifts diverse cultures bring to the faith community

GDC: The Six Fundamental Tasks of Catechesis

III. Moral Formation which provides the bases for "the moral formation which is most necessary today...[and which]...offers not only the proclaimed word but the lived word too. This moral testimony, which is prepared for by catechesis, must always demonstrate the social consequences of the demands of the Gospel." (*General Directory for Catechesis*, #85)

IV. Education for Community Life

"Catechesis prepares the Christian to live in community and to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church." (*General Directory for Catechesis*, #86)