

A Matter of Spirit



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ON THE ROAD TO SAINTHOOD

Venerable Pierre Toussaint

Venerable Mother
Mary Elizabeth Lange

Venerable Henriette DeLille

Servant of God Julia Greeley

Venerable Father Augustus Tolton

Servant of God
Sister Thea Bowman

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From the Editor

“Black Catholics have never been footnotes in the history of the US Church,” writes historian Shannen Dee Williams in her book *Subversive Habits*, which provides a history of Black Catholic religious sisters in the United States.¹ Indeed, as Matthew Cressler points out in an article for *Smithsonian* magazine, there have been Black Catholics in what is now the United States as long as there have been any Catholics on this land.² Enslaved Catholics literally built this nation’s Catholic universities and cathedrals. Black Catholics started religious orders, they ministered to urban and rural communities, and they fought and marched for civil rights.

And yet many Catholics—of any ethnicity—remain unaware of this long history. Nor has it been recognized by the global Catholic Church. While there are currently 11 saints from the United States—and many more on the path to sainthood—none of these 11 are Black. Nor do Catholics, as whole, learn about Black Catholicism in religious education or faith formation. This history is not talked about in parishes or from the pulpit and is often relegated to one or two classes at universities or seminaries.

The articles in this issue seek to raise the voices of Black Catholics, both modern and historical, and tell their stories. Along with pieces about the legacy of Black Catholicism and their ongoing work for our church, the issue features reflections on the lives and legacies of each of the six Black Americans currently on the road to sainthood: Pierre Toussaint, Mother Mary Lange, Mother Henriette DeLille, Julia Greeley, Father Augustus Tolton, and Sister Thea Bowman. The essays are accompanied by icons drawn by artist Dani Jiménez.

May the image and reflections offered here spur your own understanding of our shared faith and inspire you to work for greater equity in our church.

—Emily Sanna, Editor

About the Artist - Dani Jiménez from *And Her Saints* is a writer and illustrator from Costa Rica. She spends her time illustrating the holy in a way that is affirming and representative of those in the margins of society. You can find more of her work on Instagram (@andhersaints), Tumblr (and-her-saints), or Etsy (andhersaints).

¹ Shannen Dee Williams, *Subversive Habits: Black Catholic Nuns in the Long African American Freedom Struggle* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022), 12.

² “The History of Black Catholics in America,” Matthew J. Cressler, *Smithsonian Magazine*, June 7, 2018, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/history-black-catholics-in-america-180969271/>.

Black Catholic

BY DEACON JOSEPH CONNOR

The history of Black Catholics has been left out of the history of the Catholic Church. Some people forget that Christianity did not originate in Europe and are surprised when they learn that Black Catholic history began in the Acts of the Apostles with Philip the deacon’s conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch (8:26–40). This text is important for several reasons. First, it chronicles the conversion of the first Black African in recorded Christian history. Second, the text suggests that the man was a wealthy, literate, and powerful emissary of the Nubian queen and a faithful practicing Jew prior to his baptism. Clearly he was not an ignorant heathen. Third, the Ethiopian eunuch’s conversion predates the conversions of Sts. Paul and Cornelius. Most significantly, many cite this conversion as the very moment when the church changed from a Hebrew and Hellenist community to the truly universal and Catholic Church it is today.

Black Catholics trace their faith history back to Christian antiquity, long before other nations heard the “good news.” Christian Africa was indeed a leading light in early Christendom. Consider, for example, the contributions of St. Augustine. St. Augustine was born in Tagaste, a city in what is now Algeria, in 354, and died in Hippo in 430. After being converted to Christianity (thanks to St. Ambrose), he was ordained a priest and made bishop of Hippo at the age of 41. He became a great luminary of the African church, one of the four great founders of Catholic religious orders, and a doctor of the church.

Black Catholics also point to three popes who were born in Africa: Sts. Victor I, Melchisedech, and Gelasius I. All three shepherded the early church through tough and tumultuous times. Black Catholics also claim many other Black saints, such as Cyprian, Zeno, Anthony of Egypt, Moses the Black, Pachomius, Maurice, Athanasius, Pudentinus, Mary of Egypt, Cyril of Alexandria, Monica of Hippo, Perpetua, Felicitas, and Thecla. Some of these mystics, monastics, and martyrs literally made the church what it is today.

It is clear that Black Catholics have always been a part of the Catholic Church, but very few facts about their contributions are taught or written in history books. Comments in historical documents define Blacks as illiterate and less than Europeans. As a result, Black Catholics have been rejected and denied their rightful place in the U.S. Catholic Church for centuries.

Such prejudice continues to the present day. During my formation to the diaconate in 2003, a professor used the N-word to critique one of my papers. After discussing the matter with the archdiocese, the only solution offered was for me to sit out his class, which I did not accept. I know firsthand that it

History is Catholic History

is necessary to address racism, ignorance, and indifference and focus intentionally on the history of Black Catholics as it unfolds in the Catholic Church.

Over time, many courageous Black people have challenged white supremacy within the church and played pivotal roles in raising awareness that we are children of God. These figures include Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange, Daniel Rudd, and Venerable Augustus Tolton, all of whom challenged the church's perception of Black Catholic folk. They witnessed to their faith by ministering to their people and left lasting legacies in the face of prejudice, ignorance, and indifference.

In 1889, Daniel Rudd and the Colored Congress established the National Black Catholic Lay Caucus. This organization was followed by the National Black Lay Caucus in 1970, the National Office of Black Catholics in 1970, and the National Black Catholic Congress in 1987. In July 1990, the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus designated November as Black Catholic History Month. These organizations have brought to light racism and discrimination against Black Catholics, which have deprived them of the ability to be authentically Black and authentically Catholic (to paraphrase Sister Thea Bowman) and excluded their contributions to the Catholic Church.

Black Catholic Advisory Circle

The Black Catholic Advisory Circle (BCAC) is dedicated to acknowledging and celebrating the invaluable gifts and contributions of Black Catholics to both the Catholic Church and the Archdiocese of Seattle. With a mission of providing a direct and empowered voice for Black Catholics within the archdiocese, the BCAC is committed to fostering an inclusive and informed community. They do so by offering events, educational activities, and resources aimed at evangelizing and enlightening the broader Catholic community about the rich heritage of Black Catholics. The council also serves as a bridge between the archdiocese and Black Catholics, actively addressing critical issues such as racial justice, the promotion of vocations, increasing African American representation within the archdiocese, and addressing educational disparities affecting African American students.

To learn more about their work and get connected visit: bcacseattle.org.

In the Archdiocese of Seattle, Walter Hubbard, with the approval of Archbishop Hunthausen, founded the Seattle branch of the Catholic Interracial Council in 1964–1969. In the early '70s, the Office of Black Catholics was reconvened. Over the next 20 years, under the administration of the archdiocese, the title and administrators changed several times.

Today, members of the Black Catholic Advisory Circle of the Archdioceses of Seattle (BCAC) continue the effort to affirm our gifts and contributions to the universal Catholic Church and the church in western Washington. We create opportunities to share our gifts, tell our stories, develop lay leadership, and plan outreach events to promote social justice. We work in partnership with Seattle University Campus Ministry, the Institute for Catholic Thought and Culture, and the Seattle Archdiocese Office of Multicultural Ministry, and we collaborate with the South Seattle Racial Solidarity Team, the North Seattle Racial Justice Team, and Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center.

Through our efforts, we have hosted or participated in events that address evangelization, catechesis, and social justice. We have also provided the archdiocese with a "Pastoral Plan of Action for the Evangelization and Pastoral Care of Blacks" with the hopes that it will inspire our archdiocese to bear witness to the world that we are a true community of faith.

Throughout my 78 years as a Catholic, I am encouraged by the six African American Catholics who are currently on the road to officially being recognized as saints in the Catholic Church. Their stories offer us glimpses of holiness, courage, resilience, creativity, and joy in the face of grave injustice. I hope that reading their stories in this issue will do the same for you.

For more information and to get involved, visit nbccongress.org and bcacseattle.org.

Deacon Joseph Connor has lived in Seattle, Washington for 43 years and is a native of New Orleans. Joseph and his wife, Barbara Cormier Connor, have been married 55 years and are blessed with three sons and two grandchildren. Deacon Joseph and Barbara are members of Seattle's Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, and he was ordained a deacon there in 2003. He is also chair of the liturgy commission, a member of the parish council, and liaison to the faith formation team. Joseph is a Seattle Police Community Chaplain and a fourth-degree knight of the Knights of Peter Claver. He is president of the National Association of Black Catholic Deacons, a board member of the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus, and cochair of the Archdiocese of South Seattle Deanery Racial Solidarity Committee.

Carrier of Christ's Cross

◇ VENERABLE PIERRE TOUSSAINT (1776 – 1853) ◇

BY ETHAN MALVEAUX

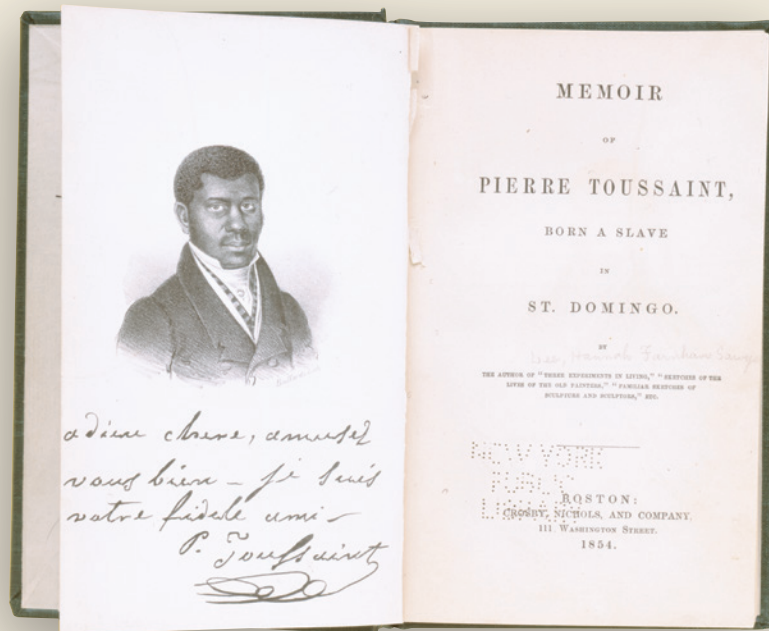
In many ways, Venerable Pierre Toussaint remains an enigma 170 years after his death. What is concretely known—his Haitian and African ancestry, his 40 years of serving the Bérard family as an enslaved worker, his occupation as a hairdresser, and his reputation as a well-known Catholic of colonial New York—can easily be misconstrued. While in many ways this means that Toussaint became a blank canvas for a variety of causes, it is possible to better understand this man whose Christian example won admirers on both sides of the color line.

It is impossible to understand anything about Pierre Toussaint without first acknowledging the important role faith played in his daily life. His Catholicism was the one constant marking his entire life. Toussaint came to New York in the retinue of his owner on what was then a one-way ticket. Besides the clothes on his back, all he carried with him was his faith.

Toussaint's faith is inextricably linked to the social order of St. Domingue, where he was born, and his early formation on the Bérard plantation. The Bérards considered it their duty to instruct their slaves not just in the practice of their religion but in the sophistication of French refinement. When Toussaint's mother, Ursule, gave birth to him in 1766, she chose names that reflected these beliefs: Pierre, for Peter, and Toussaint, or "all saints."

After moving to New York, Toussaint's position as an enslaved person in an unfamiliar land resulted in him becoming squarely nonpolitical, as involvement in politics could have jeopardized his already unstable situation. For Toussaint, politics, even when justly applied to the cause of abolition, was a policy of diminishing returns. He believed it was more productive to put his trust in the Lord's providence than in the politics of the world.

His sense of hope was supernatural rather than of a human variety. Even though the US Catholic Church was predominantly white, and he had little access to parishes, Toussaint's attachment to the sacrifice of the Mass was non-negotiable. He would never divorce himself from the graces he received from daily eucharistic adoration. Toussaint believed that in heaven, led by Jesus Christ, all humanity would worship together. Catholic ritual was as close as those on Earth could get to this heavenly worship, and Toussaint's hope of ultimate unity in the glorified church never wavered.



Memoir of Pierre Toussaint, Born a Slave in St. Domingo, (signed by Toussaint himself), 1854, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, New York Public Library

Toussaint could do works of mercy and charity for Black and white, citizen and immigrant, slave and free because Christ dwells within all people.

Whenever there was a need in the diocese for anything, particularly financial resources, white Christians made their way to Toussaint's home on Franklin Street. He could have turned these people away because of the insults and discrimination that he faced due to their indifference to the treatment of African Americans. Indeed, when Toussaint, his wife, and his mother-in-law were told they could not sit in a pew by a young white usher, he could have been bitter about the funds he gave and helped raise to build the cathedral. He could have refused to help the projects of white Catholics again. Yet he never allowed the poison of cruelty to grind down his sense of inner charity.



This inner charity is the beginning of what today is referred to as social justice.

Over and over again, the color line threw up obstacles, but each time, Toussaint overcame them. Denied entry into the clergy and religious orders both before and after his marriage, he gave counsel and financial support to their establishments and charities. He even donated funds to the group of nuns that was started by his fellow New Yorker, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton.

Toussaint only once exhibited a visible lack of hope in God's plan for him: his sister, Rosealie; his niece and adopted daughter, Euphemia; and his beloved wife, Juliette Noel, all proceeded him in death. This made Pierre inconsolable. Although he continued his daily regimen of attending Mass and engaging in acts of charity, these deaths aged him.

What most white people could not appreciate at the time of Toussaint's demise was the institutional and evangelical conviction he brought to building the church in New York City. Justice for Pierre Toussaint began with his closeness to the Lord. An intimacy with Christ in the Eucharist fed his charismatic work.

He made his home an orphanage, welcoming both Black and white orphans. It is not an exaggeration to say that he laid the foundation for what would become a network of parochial schools and Catholic charities.

What is to account for this care of Blacks, whites, and immigrants alike? An expression that was attributed to Toussaint—"we must take it as God sends it"—sheds light on the way in which he saw justice. Justice was not a mere subjective enterprise for better recognition by the state. It was a manifestation of the sacred presence of God on Earth, and it was to be given to all.

Toussaint could do works of mercy and charity for Black and white, citizen and immigrant, slave and free because Christ dwells within all people. This was neither acquiescence nor obeisance to white supremacy; rather it was a confrontation with a system that had no regard for Blacks as a productive people. The fact that Pierre Toussaint is now buried among the prelates of the New York Archdiocese, in the crypt of the new St. Patrick's Cathedral on Fifth Avenue, is a testament to his trust in the divine will.

Venerable Pierre Toussaint, pray for us!

Ethan Malveaux is a graduate of Fordham Preparatory School and of Fordham University. He is the author of The Color Line: A History as well as the illustrator of The Mysteries of the Rosary and St. Katherine Drexel. He lives in Teaneck, New Jersey.

A LEGACY LASTING GENERATIONS

◊ VENERABLE MOTHER MARY ELIZABETH LANGE (1784 – 1882) ◊

BY BARBARA CONNOR

“Our sole wish is to do the will of God.”

When I moved to Seattle in 1979, I never dreamed that I would meet people who knew a member of my family. In fact, when I moved, I only knew I had one cousin in the area, but I was never able to find her.

However, when I joined the Catholic Church, I met many people who knew my aunt, Sister Marie Celine Lawrence, a member the Holy Family Congregation. Sister Celine taught at a Catholic school in Algiers, Louisiana, and I met two families whose children had attended that school. They raved about her love for children and her dedication to having the best school in the Diocese of New Orleans. As a principal of the school, she ensured that the curriculum included not only basic core subjects, but classical music and stage productions as well.

My aunt was well loved by families because of her care for the children, strict discipline, and dedication to teaching the whole child. According to the stories I’ve heard, she recognized the need to educate African American children; she held high standards; and she instilled in students the need to attend college and prepare to meet the demands of the world.

Another African American sister likewise inspires me. Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange knew that an education for African American children was a powerful tool to change their living conditions. Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange, a Black religious sister, founded the country’s first African American religious congregation in Baltimore in 1829. She worked tirelessly to educate African American children, especially girls, who were lacking an education.

In her years as a nun, Sister Celine experienced hardship, racism, and poverty, yet she poured all her energy into giving the children at many Catholic schools an excellent education. It was her knowledge of education, leadership skills, and deep faith that kept her going. She was always in demand as a principal of Catholic schools that were failing and in need of an energized uplift.



Similarly, Lange recognized the lack of education for the children of her fellow Black immigrants. With a friend, she established St. Frances Academy in her own home and with her own money offered free schooling to Baltimore’s African American children. She went on to found the Oblate Sisters of Providence, the first religious community for women of African descent. The congregation’s purpose was to provide religious and general education to African Americans. Lange and the other sisters also responded to the needs they encountered over time, including taking in orphans and widows, educating freed slaves, nursing people who were dying during the cholera epidemic, and cleaning at St. Mary’s Seminary.

It is said of Mother Mary Lange that she practiced her faith to an extraordinary degree. She experienced hardship, racism, and poverty, yet she poured all her energy into giving the children in the Catholic schools an excellent education. In fact, it was her deep faith that enabled her to persevere against all odds. To her Black brothers and sisters, she gave of herself and her material possessions until she was empty of all but Jesus, whom she shared generously with all by being a living witness to his teaching. Likewise, when Sister Celine came to visit with us, she was usually spent, exhausted from sharing all that she had with the school children.

Both Sister Celine and Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange left a legacy that continues today. Their legacy transcends over generations, as children continue to attend Catholic schools led by both order of nuns, the Holy Family Sisters and Oblate Sisters of Providence. Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange was made venerable on June 22, 2023!

Venerable Mother Mary Lange, pray for us!

Barbara Connor a retired director of religious education at Immaculate Conception parish in Seattle.

A WOMAN OF EXTRAORDINARY STRENGTH

◇ VENERABLE HENRIETTE DELILLE (1813 – 1862) ◇

BY ALETHEA BRAGGS

*“I believe in God, I hope in God. . .
I want to live and die for God.”*

Who chooses a path of religious service in a world that does not respect you as a person because of your color and your sex? Who chooses to fight against the odds and surrender to a call from God? And who chooses to give up everything and follow the path that God has placed before them?

That person is Servant of God Henriette Delille.

Today Venerable Henriette Delille is on the road to becoming a saint in the Catholic Church, a journey that began in 1988 when the Vatican opened her cause for canonization. In 2010, Pope Benedict XVI declared her venerable, a first for a New Orleans native.

A French-speaking woman of African descent, Henriette Delille was born in 1812 and grew up in the famous French Quarter of New Orleans. In 1836, she founded the Sisters of the Holy Family, a community of nuns who provided care for the elderly and sick, fed the poor, and taught people of color, who at that time had limited educational resources available to them.

Her mission continues to be a difficult ministry today. Can you image what it was like in the mid-19th century, in the midst of slavery? That in and of itself should be grounds for her canonization.

My love and respect for Henriette Delille began even before I was born. My grandfather took care of the grounds at the Sisters of the Holy Family motherhouse on Chef Mentur Highway, and my grandmother worked at the Lafon Nursing home, which the sisters own. When my grandmother fell ill, my grandfather could not take care of eight children and work, so the sisters stepped up and took care of my mom and her siblings at the boys and girls home the sisters owned and managed.

As a young girl, I was taught by the Sisters of the Holy Family from fifth grade through high school. I have experienced their unselfish love and desire to continue the work of their foundress in educating young people, caring for the sick, and feeding the



poor. Their example and presence instilled in me the desire to walk in my calling, regardless of the hurdles and distractions.

Henriette Delille created a legacy that the sisters continue today. Even though their numbers are at an all-time low, their devotion to their mission has not lessened. Each one of them, regardless of age and sometimes health challenges, puts forth every effort to continue the work their foundress began over 175 years ago. Keenly aware of all the negative things going on in the world, the sisters continue to minister to the needs of God's people without hesitation.

What a testimony to life and perseverance!

Now I have the opportunity to give back to them a small part of what they gave to me and my family. I use my skills to help the sisters promote and spread the word of Delille and her community. It is important for the continued progress of her cause to make sure people, both nationally and internationally, know who she was and the importance of her work and legacy.

My personal prayer is that her legacy and that of the Sisters of the Holy Family continue. A woman who made a difference and continues to make a difference in the lives of many people, Delille is a gift from God. She is the first US-born African American formally postulated for canonization. Let us continue to pray for her and the others that are up for canonization. Let their Spirit-filled lives continue to enhance, empower, and strengthen the lives of many, as it has mine. It is such an honor to be able to say that I am a part of her wonderful legacy.

Venerable Mother Henriette Delille, pray for us!

Alethea Braggs is the owner of Destiny Productions, a video production company.

JULIA GREELEY



♦ SERVANT OF GOD JULIA GREELEY (CA.1833 – 1918) ♦

In the only picture that exists of Julia Greeley, taken two years before her death, she is wearing an old dress and a big, broad-rimmed hat (*at right*). She holds a small white child in her arms. Her face is shadowed, so you can't tell that she was blind in one eye, where she had been hit in the face by a slave owner's whip. What you also can't see is how her faith led her to care for an entire city.



Greeley, who was born around 1835 in Missouri, converted to Catholicism in 1880. She had a profound devotion to the Sacred Heart. She went to Mass daily, fasting until noon and telling people that “my Communion is my breakfast.” But her faith also shone through her works: despite having little financial resources herself, she dedicated her life to helping the poor in Denver, where she spent the later part of her life, find whatever they needed. This ranged from food and fuel to mattresses and baby carriages—even party dresses for teenage girls.

Thronged of people showed up to her funeral, and the *Denver Catholic Register* said in her obituary that “her life reads like that of a canonized saint.” Almost 100 years later, the broader church is also recognizing that fact: her cause for canonization was opened in 2016.

Servant of God Julia Greeley, pray for us!

THEY WILL BE CALLED GREAT IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN...

♦ VENERABLE FATHER AUGUSTUS TOLTON (1854 – 1897) ♦

BY ALTHA MARIE JORDAN-GREEN

“Whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

(MATTHEW 5:19)

Jesus Christ said that those who teach his words and tell others to do them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. There are two great men I'd like everyone to know about: Venerable Father Augustus Tolton (1854–1897) and my baby brother, Reverend Canon Alvin Gerard Jordan (1967–2022). Both were ordained priests and leaders among Black Catholics and in the greater United States. These men had so much wisdom, understanding, and golden treasures to offer to the soul. Tolton was called to teach the commandments of Jesus and encourage others to apply Christ's wisdom throughout their lives. My brother lived by Tolton's example, along with that of Bishop Joseph N. Perry. He often told me, “People around you will be drawn to Christ and seek Father Tolton's story.”

Tolton was the first Catholic priest of recognizable African descent in the United States. His life of heroic virtue and leadership was historic and unprecedented. Ordained in Rome in 1886, Tolton was the first Black priest to identify with the African American community and address the subtle particulars of 19th-century prejudice found in society and the church.

Born a slave in 1854 in Brush Creek, Missouri, Tolton lost his father in the Civil War and fled along the Underground Railroad with his mother and siblings to Quincy, Illinois. After repeated unsuccessful applications over seven years to several different US seminaries, receiving no answer or being rejected because he was Black, the Franciscan fathers finally maneuvered his acceptance into the Propaganda Fide seminary and college in Rome.

After his ordination on April 24, 1886, he returned to Quincy for three years. He was then sent to Chicago, where he took a fledgling group of Black Catholics that gathered at 9th and Wabash Street and advanced them to their own parish, St. Monica's. In 1891, he



Top: Father Augustus Tolton. Wikimedia Commons. Bottom: Reverend Canon Alvin Gerard Jordan. Courtesy of the author.

Gerard served in that capacity until his sudden death, promoting the cause by traveling around the country preaching and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ through the story of Venerable Augustus Tolton and the other five Black American candidates for sainthood. As often as I could, I traveled with my brother to different states.

Tolton's cause for sainthood grew momentum over time and, in 2014, his dossier was sent to Rome for consideration. In 2015, Gerard became the force behind the Tolton Ambassador Program, a project of the Father Tolton Guild. Women and men around the country volunteer to maintain momentum around Tolton's cause for beatification and canonization. We, the Tolton Ambassadors, are commissioned to teach the faithful about the significance of his cause; work with pastors and religious education leadership to make his story a part of instruc-

began construction of a church for this parish. However, due to a lack of finances, the construction never got beyond the first level and a temporary roof.

Tolton suffered an untimely death in 1897 at the age of 43, due to heatstroke during an exceptional heatwave that hit the city. However, he had already established himself as a leader among Black Catholics in Chicago and in the United States. He is a pioneer, an apostle of charity and inclusion, and a symbol of the universality of the church. He reminds us of the courage we have within our hearts to continue to work for racial and ethnic solidarity while eradicating all forms of hesitancy and intolerance.

My brother, Reverend Canon Alvin Gerard Jordan, was inspired by Tolton in his own vocation. Gerard began discerning his vocation to the priesthood in 1975 as a young boy under the mentorship of Congregation of the Holy Spirit Father Albert J. McKnight and later under Society of the Divine Word Bishop Dominic Carmon. He was educated by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament while attending Immaculate Heart of Mary School and graduated from St. Louis High School, both in Lake Charles, Louisiana.

Gerard was ordained on the anniversary of Augustus Tolton's death, July 9, 2016. Solemn vows and ordination afforded him the blessing to serve the church as one of only four African American canons in the world. My baby brother was a leader among men.

In 2011, Cardinal Francis George announced that, with the church's pursuit of Father Tolton's canonization, he would appoint persons to promulgate the cause. He appointed Bishop Joseph Perry as the postulator, who in turn appointed my brother as his special assistant for the cause while he was still a seminarian in Chicago.

tion for adults, children, and youth; and promote prayer for the success of the cause. With the permission of local pastors, we encourage support of the cause through meetings, study days of reflection, and other types of gatherings.

While our primary assignment is to support the Tolton cause, especially through intercessory prayer, we offer this support while addressing the needs of the local church. My brother often reminded me and anyone who would listen that he brought the essence of his diaconate into his priestly ministry, and the Tolton cause allowed him to be of service in this way.

On September 17, 2020, Father Gerard became the inaugural executive director of the newly established online Tolton Spirituality Center. The program educates congregations in how to stop doing maintenance and instead focus on thriving through living out the mission of the church. This initiative is funded by a one million-dollar Lilly Endowment grant that I am very proud to tell the world my brother secured. *"Our steps are made firm by the LORD, when he delights in our way"* (Psalm 37:23).

*Venerable Father Augustus Tolton
and Reverend Canon Gerard, pray for us!*

Altha Marie Jordan-Green is blessed to be the wife of Oscar C. Green, the mother of three children, and a grandmother of three. She is a member of Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church in Lake Charles, Louisiana, where she participates in the gospel choir, Knights of Peter Claver (KPC) Ladies of Auxiliary, and KPC Gracious Ladies of Grace. She also serves as the convener for the Tolton Ambassadors and Associates in Louisiana and on is the board of directors for the Tolton Spirituality Center based in Chicago.



“I’LL LIVE UNTIL I DIE”

◊ SERVANT OF GOD SISTER THEA BOWMAN (1937 – 1990) ◊

BY GREG LIND

“God is present in everything. In the universe in creation, in me and all that happens to me, in my brothers and sisters, in the church—everywhere.”

In an interview for *60 Minutes* in 1987, Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration Thea Bowman told host Mike Wallace: “I think the difference between me, and some other people is that I am content to do any little bit. Sometimes people think they have to do big things in order to make change. If each one of us would light a candle, we’d have a tremendous light.”

During the interview, Bowman encouraged Wallace to say, reluctantly, “Black is beautiful” three times. Afterward Wallace recalled that “Thea has the remarkable quality of bringing people together, Black and white, Catholics, Protestants, and Jews, kids and oldsters. I am reluctant to say too much because



it will make her sound better than life, but it is pretty hard to do much better than Sr. Thea Bowman. She is just a remarkable individual.”

The granddaughter of a slave, Bertha Bowman was born in 1937 to the only Black doctor and one of the few Black teachers in Yazoo City, Mississippi. The Delta region had some of the most rigid and harshly enforced Jim Crow laws and social practices; as a result, Bertha’s folks, practicing Methodists, sent her to attend the new Holy Child Jesus parish school staffed by the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, who had come from La Crosse, Wisconsin.

Bowman spoke up at a time when Black Catholics did not have much of a voice.

Bertha was a bold, loud, and exuberant child who early on searched for the meaning of life. Her Protestant parents reluctantly allowed Bertha’s conversion to Catholicism at the age of 10. They were even less thrilled when she wanted to join the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. However, they eventually relented, and in 1953 she left the tightly knit confines of her Black community to be the only African American nun at the all-white congregation in La Crosse. (Her parents eventually joined the Catholic Church themselves.)

Bertha took the name Thea (which means “of God”) upon entering the convent. In 1958, she completed her vows. She earned a bachelor’s degree from Viterbo University in La Crosse in 1965, plus a master’s degree and doctorate in English literature from Catholic University in 1972.

Bowman returned to Viterbo to teach. This was where I met her: In the early ’70s I took two courses with her on Southern and Black Literature. We read diverse authors such as Eudora Welty, William Faulkner, and Malcolm X. Bowman was an expert on Faulkner, professing that he “taught us to appreciate my state of Mississippi, both the glory and the shame of it” and “helped me understand white folks, their ways of thinking and feeling and relating.”

In 1974, Bowman took us on a bus trip to Canton, Mississippi. This was the first time I had witnessed overt racism, both seeing “White Only” signs and experiencing jeers as I walked downtown with my fellow students, who were Black. The rules of conduct in the deep South were in full display. This episode permanently affected my life.

Meanwhile, Bowman’s ministry continued to grow and attracted national attention. Soon she was in demand to speak to congregations of all races and travelled around the United States and to several foreign nations. After 16 years of teaching, she established the Institute of Black Studies at Xavier University in New Orleans. She also served as a consultant for intercultural awareness for the Diocese of Jackson, Mississippi. In that role, she spoke throughout the country, giving over 100 presentations that combined singing, gospel preaching, prayer, and storytelling about visionary affirmative action, human dignity, and social justice.

In 1978, she returned to Mississippi to care for her aging parents. Bowman was diagnosed with terminal bone cancer in 1984, but she continued her schedule in a wheelchair. In 1989, I made plans for her to present in Seattle, but her pain was too overwhelming to travel. She did accept an invitation that year to be a keynote speaker at the US Conference of Catholic Bishops. At the end of her presentation, she had the bishops standing, crying, and swaying with arms interlocked singing “We Shall Overcome.” On the same trip, she became the first African American woman to receive an honorary doctorate degree from Boston College.

Bowman continued to travel, sing, and preach as long as she could, even after she was confined to a wheelchair. She died at home on March 30, 1990.

Bowman spoke up at a time when Black Catholics did not have much of a voice. She inspired many to be proud of their Black history and the gifts that Black Catholics give to the church. She was always centered on social justice and desired to lift up poor people.

Although she is already considered a saint by those whose lives she touched, the Catholic Church has begun the formal process of canonizing her. Bowman had the ability to bring people together from different backgrounds. She professed that the church belongs to Black Catholics as much as to other parishioners, proclaiming, “The Catholic Church could not be Catholic without us!”

Servant of God Sister Thea Bowman, pray for us!

Greg Lind, ARNP, and his wife, Diane, moved to Seattle in 1987, where Greg founded two clinics—Seattle’s first walk-in primary care and a unique firefighter clinic. Sister Thea Bowman was his Black literature professor at Viterbo University in 1974. Her loving spirit inspired Greg to become a member of the Seattle Archdiocese’s Black Catholic Advisory Council.

HOW BLACK CATHOLIC

SAINTS INSPIRE ACTION

BY RALPH E. MOORE, JR.

Black Catholics have always had to fight for first-class membership in the American Catholic Church, through hundreds of years of enslavement and a century and a half of racial segregation. We advocated to be baptized while living and laboring on plantations, and we fought to be admitted to Catholic churches, some of which we built. Once allowed inside, African Americans were forced to sit in the back or off to side. Black Catholics were required, in most churches, to wait before receiving Holy Communion until all the white Catholics had received it first.

All the while, African American Catholics put their envelopes in the collection baskets during Mass. It was the only time ushers connected with them, as they were not handed paper bulletins while white congregants got them freely. Some ushers even blocked Black Catholics from dipping their hands in the holy water font as they entered or left the church.

The indignities bestowed at the local level were extended to the institutional level: At one time, Black and Brown people were forbidden from entering seminaries and convents, Catholic schools, housing, and hospitals. There are still little to no images (statues, portraits, or missal book covers) of any people of color in US Catholic churches. And in 2023, there are *no* African American saints from the United States. There are 11 white American saints.

After centuries of enslavement, a century and a half of Jim Crow segregation inside Catholic institutions, and virtual silence during mass incarceration and mass poverty, the simple fact is that the Catholic Church owes Black Catholics. For our centuries of faithfulness and commitment to the Church, we've received unrequited love and racial hatred, unholy prejudice and discrimination.

This history is shameful, embarrassing, and just plain wrong. It is also why I, along with several other Black Catholics, founded the Initiative for the Expedited Canonizations of the Sainthood Six. We believe that if it is wrong now (and it is), then it is time to fix it. It is time to give us our saints!

Despite the gross, racist mistreatment by the white Catholic

Church in this nation, Black Catholics have remained faithful to God and members of the Catholic Church. It feels as if racial segregation remains in the US Catholic Church's DNA, despite church teachings and the fact that Black Catholics often stayed to support and serve city churches while white Catholics moved out to the suburbs.

The six African American candidates for sainthood—Mother Mary Lange, Father Augustus Tolton, Mother Henriette DeLille, Pierre Toussaint, Julia Greeley, and Sister Thea Bowman—lived through the omnipresent pain of racial prejudice and discrimination, and they did great things with their lives despite it.

That is the reason why the social justice committee at St. Ann Church created an initiative to get the first six African American candidates from the United States expedited canonizations. Saint Ann is a Black Catholic parish in inner-city East Baltimore. It is an activist congregation

comprised of many lifelong Catholics. The committee is known within the archdiocese for its energy and activism.

Two years ago, the committee started a letter writing initiative to Pope Francis, urging him to canonize the six Black candidates for sainthood immediately. The letters, including a blank signature line, were distributed to churches throughout the area. The committee organized an All Saints' Day Mass and placed a copy of the letter and a pen at each seat. Groups around the country and in some foreign countries (including Canada, Barbados, Italy, West Africa, and Germany) heard about our campaign, requested copies of the letter via email, and obtained signatures. Some sent their letters to us; a few sent theirs directly to Vatican City.

On December 14, 2021, the committee sent 1,500 letters to Pope Francis. On June 17, 2022, we sent another 1,500 letters. We also sent copies to Archbishop Christophe Pierre, the Vatican Ambassador to the United States. This October, we traveled to Rome and hand delivered another 1,000 letters to the pope and the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints.

We have spoken to multiple bishops and a cardinal about the initiative, because as laypeople, we need bishops as allies to get the attention of the Vatican.

Another strategy toward expedited canonizations for what we've affectionately called the "Sainthood Six" is public education through the media. When the committee held its first All Saints' Day Mass, we informed the media, and articles appeared in numerous outlets. We have deliberately raised the profiles

The more people know of and talk of them, the more the atmosphere is created for expedited canonizations.

PRAY FOR RACIAL JUSTICE IN YOUR PARISHES AND COMMUNITIES



Create a program to educate the congregation and religious who are serving the church and school about the history of racial prejudice in the Catholic Church, particularly how the Saintly Six fought through it to live great lives.



Take advantage of occasions such as Black History Month and All Saints' Day to acknowledge and advocate for the Saintly Six in church and during Mass. Consider singing the hymn "Oh When the Saints Go Marching In" while pictures of the six candidates are processed into the church.



Post pictures of Mother Lange, Father Tolton, Mother DeLille, Toussaint, Greeley, and Sister Bowman prominently in your church. Large images can be purchased on the National Black Catholic Congress website or at the Office of Black Catholics in New Orleans.



During the prayers of the faithful, include a petition for the expedited canonizations of the six candidates.

CONTINUE ADVOCATING FOR THE SAINTHOOD OF THE SIX



Contact the bishops and/or cardinal of your diocese (by letter, phone, or in person) and urge them to contact the Vatican to end the absence of Black American saints.



Write letters to Pope Francis calling for expedited canonizations. For a copy of the letter and instructions on how to send it, please visit ipjc.org/saintlysix/



Contact the Vatican Ambassador to the United States, Cardinal Christophe Pierre, at nuntiususa@nuntiususa.org or (202) 333-7121 and ask him to advocate for the expedited canonizations. Organize others in your parish to do so as well.



Finally, brainstorm organizing and advertising ideas to spread the word of the absence of Black American saints. Have everyone within the sound of your voice understand that if it is wrong now (and it is), the Catholic Church must fix it now!



Sisters of the Holy Family, New Orleans
(founded by Henriette DeLille), Louisiana,
1899, Wikimedia Commons

What is Black Catholic History Month?

According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, there are over 3 million Black Catholics in the United States today. From the very roots of this nation, Black Catholics have played a vital role in building our church. Indeed, the history of Black Catholicism goes back even further—all the way back to Acts of the Apostles, when Philip converted the Ethiopian eunuch. And yet Black Catholic stories often remain untold, especially in this country.

On July 24, 1990, the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus met at Fordham University and voted to declare November as Black Catholic History Month, a time to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments and heritage of Black Catholics in the United States.

November is a time when we pray for all the saints and souls who have died before us, and it also includes several additional dates important to Black Catholics. These include November 3, the feast of St. Martin de Porres, and November 14, the birthday of St. Augustine.

of these six African Americans: The more people know of and talk of them, the more the atmosphere is created for expedited canonizations.

All are called to advocate for the expedited canonizations of the Saintly Six. It is clearly a racial justice issue. Above are some suggestions for how you can help.

The social justice committee has committed to working persistently on the expedited canonizations. We prayed, collected signatures, spoke on a webinar and a podcast as well as on many Zoom sessions and in-person at churches. The committee is

dedicated to faith in action. We believe God wants the six saints canonized here on Earth, and we profess to be "coworkers with God," using a phrase from Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." "When we all fight for justice, we win," the labor movement advises. So, for the expedited canonizations we ask, if not now, when? If not ours, who?

Ralph E. Moore, Jr. is a lifelong Catholic who has served on various committees on race, racism, and poverty in the Archdiocese of Baltimore. He is also a writer and member of the St. Ann Social Justice Committee.

Reflection Process

As you read through the essays and reflections in this issue, we invite you to reflect on your own experiences of race and racism. The following reflection questions are based on “Engaging in a ‘racial examination of conscience,’” written by Mark Schmidt and published by To Go Forth, a blog from the USCCB’s Department of Justice, Peace & Human Development and inspired by Pope Francis.

- ◇ Do I interact with people who are different from me outside of work or school?
- ◇ Do I read books or stories written by people of different ethnic or religious heritage than myself?
- ◇ Have I taken the time to listen to the voices of others who don’t look like me or have a different background and life experience than me?
- ◇ Have I ever asked someone about their heritage or ethnicity by asking, “So, what are you?”?
- ◇ Have I ever seen someone on the street and made a judgment based on how they dress, how their hair is styled, how they walk, how they speak?
- ◇ Do I blame the victims who suffer poverty and/or oppression for their plight?
- ◇ Do I try to come up with excuses for things I do or say that are perceived as racist or harmful by others?
- ◇ Do I always speak to others from different backgrounds with respectful tone and language?
- ◇ Do I use dehumanizing language about others, referring to people as “thugs,” “animals,” “illegals,” etc.?
- ◇ When trying to show a broad ethnic representation for my community or institution, do I randomly place minorities in advertisements? Do I ask for input on how advertisements may be perceived outside of my own culture?
- ◇ Do I take the time to learn and listen to the stories of others’ lives in order to better understand them and the challenges they may face that I do not?
- ◇ Do I see Jesus Christ in each and every person I encounter every single time? Do I love each and every person regardless of their heritage, the choices they have made, their status in society, or the perception I may have of them?



Art @ Cyalsta Finkbonner

SUMMER - FALL EVENTS All Our Relations Campaign

From September 23 to October 1, the Pacific Northwest community gathered to learn from the evocative art piece “All Our Relations,” crafted by Cyalsta Finkbonner with guidance and collaboration from the Lummi House of Tears Carvers, Doug and Jewel Jones. In total, the campaign made seven stops in three states, with over 600 registered participants. IPJC focused its efforts on promoting and supporting the gatherings in Olympia, Spokane, and Seattle. Thank you to all our community members who attended actions: please stay tuned as the movement and work develop!

Youth Action Team Internship

In August, IPJC welcomed Kameron Powell as the new YATI cofacilitator. Kameron will lead YATI alongside Sarah Pericich-Lopez this year. On September 9, Sarah and Kameron began the year with a day-long retreat, allowing the students to familiarize themselves with IPJC, their cofacilitators, and one another. Thus far, the cohort of 14 students has completed weekly workshops on the basics of community organizing, identity development, listening skills, and one-to-one relational meetings. In November, the interns will begin a month-long listening campaign with the goal of completing 140 one-to-one meetings.



What's Happening at IPJC



All Our Relations, Spokane event, Photo @ Megan C Mack

St. Phoebe Day Celebration

On September 19, 42 members of the community gathered for prayer, spiritual reflection, and a synodal conversation at South Park Hall in honor of St. Phoebe. The gathering began with an intercessory prayer to St. Phoebe calling for openness to dialogue and discernment within the Synod on Synodality around women's roles and leadership within the church. A spiritual reflection that incorporated the history of the diaconate in the Catholic Church followed the prayer. Guests witnessed a synodal fishbowl-style conversation regarding women's participation, ministry, and leadership in the church. The evening concluded with a commissioning prayer for Seattle-area folks going to Rome as pilgrims for the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome.

Global Synod Letter Writing Campaign

On June 28, 2023, Pope Francis invited the People of God to continue their synodal discernment by writing him a letter responding to the discernment questions offered in the *Instrumentum Laboris*. Inspired by Pope Francis' invitation, we created a workbook that incorporates passages from the *Document for the Continental Stage*

and *Instrumentum Laboris*, as well as reflections from social justice leaders in Seattle. This workbook serves as an aid in discernment and letter writing. In October, we began gathering letters from our local community to ensure the voices and unique experiences of the Seattle community are considered throughout this last year of the Synod. It is not too late to write your letter: Please visit ipjc.org/the-pope-wants-to-hear-from-you/ to obtain your Global Synod Letter Writing Workbook, view letter writing instructions, and submit your letter!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Northwest Ignatian Advocacy Summit

**February 22-24, 2024
at Seattle University**



Join IPJC- and Jesuit-sponsored works in the Northwest as we gather in an intentional intergenerational summit oriented towards developing capacity for justice work and acting together for environmental justice. More details to come!

I Will Live Until I Die (*A Musical on the Life of Sr. Thea Bowman*)



© Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration

by **Vallimar Jansen**

March 1 and 2, 2024

at St. Patrick's Church

Award-winning artist Vallimar Jansen will collaborate with Bestey Beckman, St. Joseph Parish, and the broader community to bring Sr. Thea's story to life. Please join us to celebrate her legacy!

Creation Care Network Summit 2024: Let Justice and Peace Flow



A Mighty River
Amos 5: 24

**Saturday, March 16, 2024
at Seattle University**

Join the Creation Care Network for its annual summit as we continue to work towards reciprocity and healing with all of creation.

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Cover: © Dani Jiménez/& her saints, details see page 2.

ipjc@ipjc.org • ipjc.org

A LITANY FOR THOSE NOT READY FOR HEALING

Let us not rush to the language of healing, before understanding the fullness of the injury and the depth of the wound.

Let us not rush to offer a Band-Aid when the gaping wound requires surgery and complete reconstruction...

Let us not offer false equivalencies, thereby diminishing the particular pain being felt in a particular circumstance in a particular historical moment.

Let us not speak of reconciliation without speaking of reparations and restoration, or how we can repair the breach and how we can restore the loss.

Let us not rush past the loss of this mother's child, this father's child... someone's beloved son.

Let us not value property over people; let us not protect material objects while human lives hang in the balance.

Let us not value a false peace over a righteous justice.

Let us not be afraid to sit with the ugliness, the messiness, and the pain that is life in community together.

Let us not offer clichés to the grieving, those whose hearts are being torn asunder.

Instead...

Let us mourn black and brown men and women, those killed extrajudicially every 28 hours.

Let us lament the loss of a teenager, dead at the hands of a police officer who described him as a demon.

Let us weep at a criminal justice system, which is neither blind nor just.

Let us call for the mourning men and the wailing women, those willing to rend their garments of privilege and ease and sit in the ashes of this nation's original sin.

Let us be silent when we don't know what to say.

Let us be humble and listen to the pain, rage, and grief pouring from the lips of our neighbors and friends.

Let us decrease, so that our brothers and sisters who live on the underside of history may increase.

Let us pray with our eyes open and our feet firmly planted on the ground.

Let us listen to the shattering glass and let us smell the purifying fires, for it is the language of the unheard.

God, in your mercy...

Show me my own complicity in injustice
Convict me for my indifference

Forgive me when I have remained silent.
Equip me with a zeal for righteousness.

Never let me grow accustomed or acclimated to unrighteousness.

—DR. YOLANDA PIERCE