



African  
American  
Affairs  
Ministry  
Diocese of  
Charlotte

# African American Affairs Ministry Diocese of Charlotte

Spring 2022  
Vol. I

“Don’t let anything stop you. There will be times when you’ll be disappointed, but you can’t stop.”  
—Sadie T. M. Alexander

**CELEBRATING  
THE PAST**  
**LOOKING TOWARD  
THE FUTURE**  
BLACK HISTORY MONTH

“A man without knowledge of himself and his heritage is like a tree without roots.”  
—Dick Gregory

*Black History Month is an annual celebration of achievements by African Americans and a time for recognizing their central role in U.S. history. Black History Month grew out of “Negro History Week,” the brainchild of noted historian Carter G. Woodson and other prominent African Americans. Since 1976, every U.S. president has officially designated the month of February as Black History Month. Other countries around the world, including Canada and the United Kingdom, also devote a month to celebrating Black history.*

*Black History Month is also a time to consider how we can create more justice in our daily lives, how we can help education institutions become places in which all the students served, especially African American students, thrive and how can we make sure that all families, particularly those from African American backgrounds, feel welcome in all aspects of life.*

*During Black History Month, let us pause and reflect on our own biases, stereotypes, gaps in knowledge, and relationships across racial differences so that we can be leaders in creating a system in which equity, inclusion, and social justice are at the forefront.*

“Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.”  
—Barack Obama

“Hold on to your dreams of a better life and stay committed to striving to realize it.”  
—Earl G. Graves, Sr.

“The way to right wrongs is to turn the light of truth upon them.”  
—Ida B. Wells

# The Unsung Black Catholic Women



Sisters of the Holy Family, New Orleans, La;  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sisters\\_of\\_the\\_Holy\\_Family\\_\(Louisiana\)#/media/File:Sisters\\_of\\_the\\_Holy\\_Family,\\_New\\_Orleans,\\_La\\_LCCN2001705864.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sisters_of_the_Holy_Family_(Louisiana)#/media/File:Sisters_of_the_Holy_Family,_New_Orleans,_La_LCCN2001705864.jpg) (Public Domain)

Since the earliest introduction of African slaves into the Americas, Black women have played prominent roles in the propagation of Catholic faith, education, and charity. In the 18th century, for example, Black women constituted the majority of the church's membership in New Orleans, Louisiana, and free Black women served as godparents to more than 80 percent of the city's enslaved population.

Beginning in the 19th century, women became the first representatives of the African American community to enter religious life. Barred from joining white sisterhoods due to exclusionary admissions policies that lasted until well into the 20th century, Black women first succeeded in becoming sisters by either passing for white in white congregations or establishing their own orders.

Between 1824 and 1922, African American women organized at least eight historically Black and Afro-Creole orders, of which three are still in existence.

The surviving congregations are the Oblate Sisters of Providence (1828) in Baltimore, Maryland; the Sisters of the Holy Family (1842) in New Orleans, Louisiana; and the Franciscan Handmaids of the Most Pure Heart of Mary (1916) in Savannah, Georgia and later Harlem, New York.

The first known African American woman to enter religious life was Nellie Morgan, who was the sixth member of the Kentucky-based Sisters of Loretto, the first Catholic sisterhood with an American foundation. The daughter of a white man and an ex-slave mother, Morgan passed for white in her order.

Black sisters desegregated several Catholic colleges and universities, including Saint Louis University, Villanova University, and the Catholic University of America, in the era before the Brown v. Board of Education decision. In 1933, for example, Oblate Sisters of Providence Mary of Good Counsel Baptiste and Mary Consolata Gibson re-integrated the Catholic University of America. In 1934, these sisters became the institution's first Black women graduates.

Black laywomen also encouraged and nurtured the vocations of black girls and boys in their families and parishes, reminding them constantly that a racially segregated church was a profoundly un-Catholic church.

## Catholic University of America honors Black nuns who integrated campus in 1933

The Catholic University of America has installed a sign in the middle of campus describing the period when the university refused to admit Black students and, decades later, when two Black nuns reintegrated the university in 1933. The initiative is part of the "MLK Teach-In", the university's annual month-long initiative highlighting African-American history, with events scheduled from mid-January through the midway point of Black History Month in February. The signs will only be displayed through the end of that month. The late Sisters Mary of Good Counsel Baptiste, OSP and Mary Consolata Gibson, OSP became the first Black students admitted to Catholic University of America in nearly 20 years, graduating a year later in 1934. They were also the university's first Black female graduates.



The new sign near the Edward J. Pryzbyla University Center, Catholic University of America

# The Unsung Black Catholic Women *Cont...*

For years, Dr. Shannen Dee Williams, a history professor specializing in the history of African-American nuns called for Catholic University of America officials to more fully honor the legacy of Baptiste and Gibson, it is only in 2022—nearly 90 years after the sisters first enrolled—that any obvious recognition is being implemented. *See the complete article here: CUA honors Black nuns who integrated campus in 1933* [CUA honors Black nuns who integrated campus in 1933 \(blackcatholicmessenger.com\)](https://blackcatholicmessenger.com/cua-honors-black-nuns-who-integrated-campus-in-1933)

## The Freedom Struggle

The formation of the National Black Sisters' Conference (NBSC) in 1968 was a defining moment in the history of Black female religious life. Never before had Black nuns in any part of the world gathered on a national stage to explicitly protest racism in the Catholic Church. Those gathered believed that Black sisters; as members of the nation's oldest, largest, and arguably the most influential religious denomination had a significant contribution to make in the changing Black revolution. In large part, Black sisters' voices had not been heard and in many cases they had been deliberately silenced. One way to confront racism and the moral failures of the church in relationship to the African-American community was to tell their stories and to document their lived experiences of racism and exclusion within religious life and the church as a whole.

The contributions of Black sisters in the fight for racial and educational justice in the nation and Church remains strong. Unsurprisingly, Black nuns were among the first representatives of the church to embrace the #BlackLivesMatter movement joining local protests and publishing editorials criticizing the church's ongoing failure to take racism, police violence, and other forms of structural violence seriously.

Black sisters remain among the most outspoken and consistent critics of racism in the U.S. Church.



**Sr. Mary of Good Counsel Baptiste, OSP,**  
[CUA honors Black nuns who integrated campus in 1933 \(blackcatholicmessenger.com\)](https://blackcatholicmessenger.com/cua-honors-black-nuns-who-integrated-campus-in-1933)



**Sr. Mary Consolata Gibson, OSP,**  
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## Sources

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## *Save the Date*

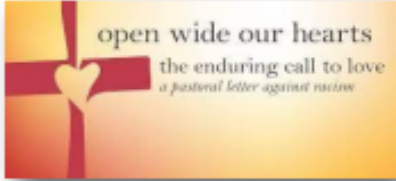
The African American Affairs Ministry ,Diocese of Charlotte, St Peter Catholic Church Social Justice Ministry and Our Lady of Consolation Black Cultural Commission presents;

### ***“Open Wide Our Hearts” The Enduring Call to Love;***

A discussion on Racism, why the racism conversations are necessary and how do we have these courageous conversations!

Register at: <https://stpeterscatholic.weshareonline.org/Openwideourhearts>

## ***Save The Date***



**Monday, February 28**  
**7:00 to 8:30 pm EST**

***Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love***  
A pastoral letter against racism issued by  
The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2018)

Presented by **Donna Toliver Grimes**, Assistant Director, Office of African American Affairs, U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops  
**Toni Tupponce**, Our Lady of Consolation Black Cultural Commission and  
**Deacon Clarke Cochran**, St. Peter Catholic Church Social Justice Ministry

***All are welcome to a courageous conversation in a safe, affirming space***

Register at <https://stpeterscatholic.weshareonline.org/Openwideourhearts>  
You will receive an email with a link to join the webinar prior to Feb. 28

Sponsored by the Charlotte Diocese African American Affairs Ministry, St. Peter Catholic Church Social Justice Ministry and Our Lady of Consolation Black Culture Commission

Questions: Contact Rosheene Adams  
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## *Black History Month Events*

- ⇒ **Archdiocese of Atlanta** - 2/20: First Annual “[Thea Bowman Celebration of Spirituals](#)” at 5pm ET at the Lyke House Catholic Center for the Atlanta University Center.
- ⇒ **Archdiocese of Baltimore**
  - ◇ 2/5: (Virtual) Servant of God Mother Mary Lange feast day celebration and guild member recommitment ceremony at 2pm ET with the Oblate Sisters of Providence. Livestream on [Facebook](#).
  - ◇ 2/12: [Virtual presentation](#) at 10am ET with Dr. Shannen Dee Williams of Dayton University. Hosted by the Baltimore Racial Justice Circle and Call To Action Maryland.
- ⇒ **Diocese of Green Bay** - 2/16: “[Black Lives Matter: A Theology](#)” at 7pm CT with Dr. Craig Ford, Jr at St. Norbert College’s Fort Howard Theater.
- ⇒ **Diocese of San Diego** - 2/5: “[A History of Racism in the Catholic Church](#)” webinar at 10am PT with Sr Irma Dillard, RCSJ at Mary Magdalene Apostle ([Independent](#)) Catholic Community.

A complete list of in-person and virtual events around the Dioceses can be found here: <https://www.blackcatholicmessenger.com/black-history-month-events-2022/>

- ⇒ [Celebrating Black History Month | Cardinal Wilton Gregory - National Black Catholic Congress Website \(nbccongress.org\)](#)
- ⇒ [Upcoming Events \(nbccongress.org\)](#)
- ⇒ <https://blackhistorymonth.gov/>
- ⇒ Watch Black History documentaries by the History Channel - <https://watch.historyvault.com/topics/black-history>
- ⇒ The Smithsonian’s Heritage and History Month Events - <https://www.si.edu/events/heritagemonth>





DIOCESE of  
CHARLOTTE  
50<sup>th</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY  
1972 • 2022

## ***“Faith More Precious Than Gold” (1 Peter 1:7)***

The Diocese of Charlotte will commemorate its 50th anniversary throughout 2022. The year-long observance, themed “Faith more precious than gold” (1 Peter 1:7), will feature a variety of events and activities including 50 Acts of Charity, a Marian Pilgrimage to 100-plus sites, Catholic Family Day at Carowinds, Charlotte Knights baseball and more.

The special anniversary website [www.faithmorepreciousthangold.com](http://www.faithmorepreciousthangold.com) was launched in January and showcases the diocese’s history, treasured sites and communities that make the diocese what it is today.

The Charlotte diocese was formally established on Jan. 12, 1972, when Bishop Michael Begley was ordained and installed as the first Bishop of Charlotte. The diocese was carved out of the Diocese of Raleigh, which previously encompassed the entire state – splitting North Carolina into two dioceses, each with approximately 30,000 Catholics at the time. The bishop noted in his proclamation, “My brothers and sisters, let us recall once more that anything we celebrate in this anniversary year is a celebration of Christ. Whatever is good and praiseworthy in the diocese, which is composed of many branches connected to the true vine, comes from God.

We are His instruments and cooperators in carrying out His message of love and reconciliation.

- Reproduced from the *Catholic News and Herald*, published Dec 29 2021 <https://www.catholicnewsherald.com/235-news/50-anniversary/7843-diocese-set-to-open-50th-anniversary-year-2>

-Read related articles: <https://catholicnewsherald.com/>

-Follow the Diocese of Charlotte 50th Anniversary: <https://50years.charlottediocese.org/>

**Congress XIII Gathering...**  
**DRUMROLL, PLEASE!**  
**Congress 13 to be held July 20-23, 2023**



**Our Next Congress**

**Congress XIII (2023)**

**July 20-23, 2023**

**The Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center**  
**201 Waterfront Street, Oxon Hill, MD 20745**

***Spiritual Enlightenment  
Outreach***

***Awareness  
Evangelization***



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

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