



The Gift of African American Music that We Share in Our Rich Catholic Liturgies

by Tyrone Pittman

I have served as music director in the Catholic church for over forty years: Holy Angels Church, 43 years, now, Our

Lady of Africa; St. Leo Church, 6 years; St. Clotilde Church, 8 years; St. Philip Neri Church, now, St. Josephine Bakhita Church, 10 years. My musical faith journey started in the Protestant church at 10 years of age. In my early twenties, I was offered an opportunity to play piano for Holy Angels Catholic Church at 607 East Oakwood in Chicago, under the leadership of the late, Fr. George Clements. Holy Angels Church had formed a Gospel Choir before my inception under the direction of Mr. Cecil Triplett who left shortly after my arrival.

At that time, the choir had a small gospel repertoire. The church was not so accepting of the idea of singing gospel music. Therefore, I had to perform a wide variety of traditional European music, and slowly usher in more gospel music. I was met with great opposition, more so from African Americans. I believe that a number of African Americans viewed the Catholic Church as a status symbol, e.g., positioning themselves above other struggling African Americans. Bringing gospel music into the Catholic liturgy may have reminded them of the place from which they were running away from.

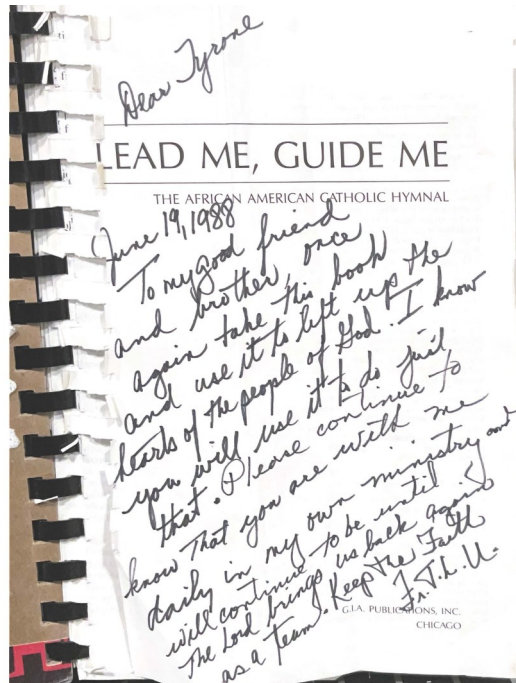
The late, Fr. Thomas L. Usher, a new associate minister at Holy Angels, wanted the choir to sing more gospel music. Surprisingly, I



Fr. Thomas L Usher

was not ready for his high demand for gospel music at that time. Fr. Usher said that he wanted some music with “fire and brimstone.” I did not move on to his demand as quickly as he would have liked for me to do so. He gave me a timeline to perform the music that he wanted for the church. He bought me a “Lead Me, Guide Me” hymn book when it was first published. He asked me to use this hymn book to enhance our Catholic liturgy. He said it is compiled with songs written by many of our accomplished African American musicians. It should be shared with the Catholic Church. I told him that I would. From that day forth, I have used this “red, black, and green covered jewel, every Sunday. This hymn book, now covered in green, is a priceless gift for the people of God.

Numerous prolific African American writers understand the healing power of Gospel music. I find Gospel music to work well in the realms of God’s spiritual hospital. People come to the Church with many needs. Gospel music is a source of Salvation.



Lead Me Guide Me hymnal first created by Sr. Thea Bowman, FSPA during the 1980s, is still in use by Black Catholic musicians and congregations.





Members of the Our Lady of Africa Choir

Members of the Our Lady of Africa Choir understand of liturgy and music in the Catholic Church. It was also there, that I would gain an in-depth appreciation for “why we do, what we do.” Steve has conducted several workshops in Chicago to help musicians minister better in the liturgy in their cultural settings. Steve is a professor at Alverno College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin where he teaches Catholic Religious Studies and conducts special religious workshops.

Gospel music has made great strides within Catholic liturgies. I have a profound love for the ministry of gospel music. I have been privileged to play gospel music in African American and other Catholic Churches with people who have a love for gospel music. There is no music, of any genre, which would fit every setting of any liturgy. Gospel music has its place too. It is particularly important to learn music that would help people pray in various ways, e.g., mournful, contemplative, reflective, energetic, etc.

Currently, I am meeting with some musicians, priests, church, and school officials in the Catholic Church to find meaningful ways to bring musicians together who minister in our Church. We must study the effects of gospel music and its best fit for various occasions, i.e., Sunday liturgies, prayer services, revivals, concerts, youth programs and dance ministries, funerals, etc.

I am eternally grateful for the contributions that Sr. Thea Bowman made for African Americans and the Catholic Church. Her ministry inspired me to help in the building of music ministry in the Catholic Church, as it did for so many other musicians. This past February 2023, I invited Dr. Aaron Mathews to Our Lady of Africa’s Heritage Celebration. We wanted him to tell us what inspired him to write a Mass in honor of Sr. Thea Bowman. He said that her life’s story moved him in a unique way—and that he knew that there was greater work for him to do in the Catholic Church.

I pray that all the musicians who minister in the Catholic Church would take an active part in the National Black Catholic Congress, the Lyke Conference, local workshops, revivals, and other special events that are offered to help our musicians to become better leaders in music ministry.



Tyrone Pittman is the music director and teacher at Our Lady of Africa Catholic Church, St. Josephine Bakhita Catholic Church, St. Ethelreda Catholic School and The Chicago Black Catholics Choir.

Many Catholic Churches in the African American community have musicians that are “on loan from the Protestant Church” to help Catholics experience the richness of its cultural musical gifts in Catholic Liturgy. Coming from the Protestant Church myself, I converted to Catholicism because of its sacred practices, in the fullness of Christmas, Easter, and its celebration of other Holy Days.

I would like to pay homage to Dr. Steven Janco who was my Professor at St. Joseph’s College. There, I studied Sacred Liturgy and Music which fostered and broadened my understanding of liturgy and music in the Catholic Church.

LGBTQ Rights and Catholic Social Teaching Go Hand in Hand

by Fr. Bryan Massingale

First published in the June 2019 issue of U.S. Catholic (Vol. 84, No. 6, page 10). Fr. Massingale has kindly given The Pulse permission to reprint this article.



The Stonewall Inn of New York sits in a quiet part of an often bustling city. Its interior and exterior are rather nondescript. Other than a commemorative plaque in an adjoining small park, there is nothing that marks its historical significance. Yet events here 50 years ago are regarded as the catalytic beginning of the modern gay rights movement. Street protests and demonstrations against police harassment—led by the more marginalized members of the gay community, including transgender persons and persons of color—fueled a demand for “gay liberation” and inspired more comprehensive struggles against social stigma and for equal justice, recognition, and acceptance.

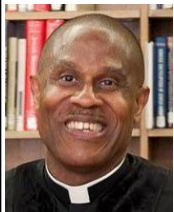
Few could have predicted the far-reaching consequences of what unfolded the night of June 28, 1969. For example, I doubt that the participants in those demonstrations could have imagined that over the course of the next 50 years their activism would lead to gays and lesbians serving openly in the military, the election of openly gay and lesbian political leaders (most recently as the mayor of Chicago), the legalization of same-sex marriages, and the candidacy of an openly gay man for the presidency. The Stonewall events of June 1969 heralded a sea change in our understandings of sexuality and gender that are still continuing today.

This is why every June “Pride” marches occur nationally and internationally, marking not only the pivotal events of the past but also celebrating the existence of gay, lesbian, trans, and queer lives. Such celebrations make visible what was previously hidden.

LGBTQ Christians, including many Catholics, participate in these Pride events. For Stonewall’s legacy of social activism also impacts the faith community’s reflection upon homosexuality and relationships with LGBTQ persons in complex and complicated ways. The increased social visibility and acceptance of same-sex relationships pose major challenges to every branch of Christianity. Questions over the baptism of children of same-sex parents, the admission of openly gay men to the priesthood and religious life, the employment of openly gay and lesbian believers as school teachers or in positions of church ministry, the provision of health care services to transgender persons, and the pastoral care of LGBTQ young people in our catechetical and sacramental programs: all of these are flashpoints for unresolved tensions in the Catholic community’s engagement with the profound mystery of human sexuality.

These tensions were publicly manifested during last fall’s Synod on Youth. There the assembled bishops grappled with how to relate to young people who have come of age in societies of increased sexual diversity and visibility. The Synod’s preparatory documents used the acronym “LGBTQ” for the first time in official church statements, yet some bishops questioned that move, wondering if it was the prelude to endorsing behaviors the church has regarded as immoral. The Synod ended with a call for deeper study of human sexuality in all its dimensions—a move that was greeted with both cautious optimism by some who hope for significant change and uneasy wariness by others who fear an erosion of traditional beliefs.

Perhaps Stonewall’s lasting legacy is the conviction that all people, regardless of gender identity and sexual expression, are equally human and possess fundamental human rights. This is a value shared by Catholic social teaching as its own bedrock conviction. This is why many Catholics publicly participate in Pride events and maintain membership in the church as their faith community wrestles with the implications of that fundamental belief for its relationship with LGBTQ persons.



Bryan N. Massingale is the James and Nancy Buckman Professor of Theological and Social Ethics, as well as the Senior Ethics Fellow in Fordham’s Center for Ethics Education. Prior to his appointment at Fordham, he was Professor of Theology at Marquette University. Professor Massingale is a leader in the field of theological ethics. He is a past Convener of the Black Catholic Theological Symposium and a former president of the Catholic Theological Society of America. Fr. Bryan is the author of *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church* (Orbis, 2010).

Our Fathers

by: Tina L Carter

As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him- Psalm 103:13



One of the greatest joys that I see is the interaction a father or father figures have with children. When I watch my brother play video games with his daughters or a library patron with his son playing with Lego blocks, a smile comes across my face. When my nephew became a father for the first time this past November, the number of emotions that he displayed over the course of a minute was astounding to see. Feelings of pride about this new life that he helped create. Fear about how was he going to protect this blessing from the cruelties of the world. Love for a daughter that he would go to the ends of the world for. Concern about what could he teach her and relief when he knew that the men and women in his own life will help him raise her to become a good and Godfearing woman of the Father

most high.

In many ways our society has deemed fatherhood as a choice that men can make, their presence in a child's life is not necessary, or they are simply a donor and a number. And yet children have proven time and again the desire, need, and demand that fathers and father figures remain active in their lives.

Students in the confirmation class at Our Lady of Africa's Parish shared with me what their fathers mean to them. For Genesis, her father is the one who protects her more than anyone else. Daniella recognizes her father's strength and the hard work that he does to provide for their family. Desmond also describes his father as hardworking. Vanessa concurs with Desmond and Daniella that their father is hardworking and does his best for their family all the time. Jeremiah appreciates his father's kindness and how cool he is. It also helps that his father let him get whatever he wants. For Yannick, his father is a counselor. His father is the person that he goes to when he needs advice, man to man. Cedric sees his father as a genuine, handsome, caring, and intelligent man who always look out for people. Cedric says that he loves his father and wouldn't trade him for the world. As I think of my own father, he has blessed me with a strong work ethic, patience, and an even temperament.

There are a variety of reasons a father is unable to be there for his children. From serving and working to create a better world to helping their children understand the power of making amends and accepting the consequences of one's actions, the power and strength of fatherhood cannot be understated. Even when fathers make the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of their families, they leave a legacy of complete unconditional love for their children.

One of the greatest examples of a good father is Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus. Even though he knew Jesus was not of his flesh and blood, he still embraced him in his spirit. Joseph was patient and understanding when his wife Mary came to him pregnant with a child that was not his own. He took on the role of sharing with Jesus all the knowledge that he had to become a good and decent man in the world. Joseph shared with Jesus the skill of carpentry so Jesus could make a living for himself when he left home. The inheritance this poor carpenter left his adopted son is priceless and we are still reaping the benefits of the love that Joseph had for Jesus today.



Finally, as confirmation student Jamil reminds us, we also have a father in heaven who is God, and it is the gift of fatherhood that God has bestowed on men to ensure that his legacy lives on. Proverbs 13:22 reminds us that "***A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, but the sinner's wealth is laid up for the righteous.***" We have faith that the inheritance fathers leave their children is one of hope, resilience, strength, and fortitude. For children, their father or father figure should be the first man they will ever know. That man reflects God's love for that child.

To All Fathers, Have a Happy and Blessed Father's Day!



My father, ***Gardis Henry Watts Sr*** was born in Meridian, Mississippi in 1934. Born to the union of my grandfather, Bartholomew Watts Sr., and my grandmother, Esther Watts, my father was the youngest of four siblings. They moved to Chicago when my father was 3-years old and was raised in Chicago from that time. He would occasionally go back to Mississippi during the summer like most Chicagoans who came from that place. After my dad graduated from Morgan Park High School, he enlisted in the Air Force in 1957, where he had a 20-year career and served a tour in Vietnam.

His experience in the Air Force was something he appreciated. The countries he visited in Africa, Asia and Europe was quite fascinating and when he narrated those experiences to me, he made me feel like I was there. Even his time in Vietnam, which he said was his lowest point in the military experience, was a learning experience that he appreciated.

My father is not Catholic. He was raised in the Baptist tradition at Beth Eden Baptist church in the Morgan Park neighborhood, which he still attends to this day. However, he was the one that started my path to the Catholic tradition. During his time in the military, he met my mom when he was stationed in the Philippines. When the possibility of marriage came up, the conversation of what will be the religion of the children was discussed. My father was a Baptist and my mother was Roman Catholic. My father agreed that his children are to be raised in the Roman Catholic tradition. Hence, me and my siblings are all 'Cradle Catholics' and raised in the Catholic Church.

My father helped me established my social identity as a black man. He gave me a sense of what racism is and how it works. Whenever he narrated his experiences with his Grandfather Henry, a former enslaved African who was liberated from slavery around the age of 8 years old, he would base his concepts of race off his teachings. My father not only was my first history teacher but he instilled in me a love for history and its relevance for today.

Despite my father being non-Catholic, he still was my primary spiritual advisor. Being a deacon at his church and occasionally leading Bible study, he was very knowledgeable about scripture and taught me the spiritual principles of scripture passages. My father enlightened me that God is black. Not for some false sense of racial superiority but to help me understand that God understands our plight as black people in this country and that one day he will liberate us from the shackles of racism as he did the Hebrew people in Egypt.

I am not the man today without the guidance of Gardis Henry Watts Sr. He has led me to this point in my life and I am eternally grateful to him for being there for me and my family. God has allowed my dad to still be here after 88 years and his presence as an elder is a continuing reminder of God's gift to me.

-Gardis Watts

I describe my dad as the best father in the world.



He is the best father in many different ways. My dad is always there for me constantly day after day. Even when I don't ask, he is always there to give me advice even

when I don't ask for it. But that's not all I'm here to talk about.

My dad is also one of the smartest historical people I ever knew. You ask my dad about any piece of history and he can tell you when it took place and what made this event and why the event came to place. But my father is always there for anything that I need and always holds my hand when I need. Always there to pick me up when I need it. Also there for me when I need a piece of advice. But he is also there for me whenever I just need a hug or need to be held because I'm having a bad day. He will go above and beyond for me and that's what makes him such a good dad.

My definition of dad is everything. Let me break that down for you. He's the king, my light, my shine, my armor. He is my protector and I love him with all my heart. I would not trade for anything in the world for him. Love you so much dad.

Happy Father's day to my father figure, I will always and forever love you. I will always have your back and I know you will always have mine. That is one of the reasons why you would always be the best father. Love you dad.

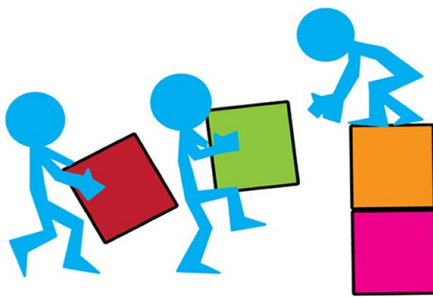
-Genesis Watts

Happy
Father's
Day

Black Catholic Initiative of the Archdiocese of Chicago

Building Our New Reality

by: Valerie Jennings



As our attention moves toward building the new reality of parish renewal, the question becomes, how do we cultivate parishes with mission vitality? That was one of the questions from our February 4th Day of Reflection gathering of Black Catholic Parish leaders.

In preparation for the 13th National Black Catholic Congress, three other areas of concern were clearly articulated during the day of reflection; (1) the role of Evangelization/Outreach, (2) attracting and engaging Youth and Young Adults, and (3) how to come together as a united body of Black Catholics in the Archdiocese of Chicago.

We know that there are no two parishes alike, but we all desire to see thriving parishes where a good number of parishioners are engaged in the ministry and mission of the parish. A healthy and spirited parish is one where people want to come to celebrate the Mass and the Sacraments, where they feel welcome and, especially the welcoming of the stranger. They are proud of their diversity and know how to draw from the gifts of the community where they worship.

A parish that is known for its mission of vitality is intentional about its evangelization efforts to bring families to a new or renewed relationship with Jesus Christ. The resounding message of hope and a convincing witness to the living Christ is truly evident in a vital parish whereby we hear the “good news” message preached that connects with those worshipping. Building on the fruit of their evangelization ministry, a strong and vital parish will provide appealing and thoughtful liturgies that are culturally inclusive that celebrate the gifts and talents of the worshipping community through word, song, and dance and even blessed quietness through meditative moments.

Parishioners known for their mission vitality will be well catechized in the spirit of the liturgy and witness to the Church's desire to make the liturgy the "source and summit" of their lives and should especially be attentive and inclusive to married couples and families in however they present themselves.

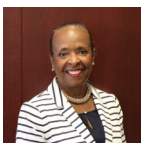
As a result of the Covid pandemic, many of our parishes became creative in their efforts aimed at various age groups in order to remain united in faith through using media and technology, including webinars. Why not continue to use these great tools to connect with our fellow sisters and brothers in the remaining Black Catholic parishes to share our ideas, our commonality, and our joint resources?

A parish known for its mission vitality has no walls that keep them from reaching out to the poor, the marginalized, the immigrant, the elderly, the millennials, the Gen-z, the divorced, the unchurched, and those that don't know Christ. A parish that strives to live in a spirit of mission vitality, is not self-absorbed with internal issues, like maintenance issues, which are important to address, but takes Jesus' command to go and make disciples, build the community of God through your witnessing of his goodness seriously.

A vital parish knows that it will be more effective in its mission if it collaborates with its neighboring parishes to stir up the fire of faith and hope in its mission territory. The call to renew and unite parishes begins with the revival of parish life. We are blessed with clergy and laity who minister in the Black Catholic community every day to provide for the spiritual needs of God's People. But our parishes also struggle to reach the hearts of the men, women, youth, those that feel unheard, and those that have left the church for a myriad of other reasons who are not sure they need God or the Church in their lives.

Mission vitality has no walls or barriers. Works of peace and justice, respect for life, and outreach to the immigrant and refugees are not programs in a vital parish, but the hallmarks of genuine discipleship. Let us do this work in the spirit of unity for all the people of God.

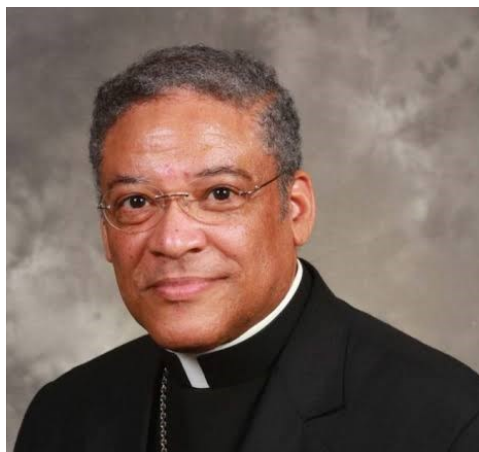
From the Day of Reflection – ‘The mission towards justice, and the ministry of evangelization for and with Black Catholics links the Black Catholic Congresses of the past to the focus of the Thirteenth Congress of today.’



Valerie Jennings has served as the Parish Vitality Coordinator in Vicariate VI for the Archdiocese of Chicago and supports the pastoral vision of the Archbishop of Chicago and Bishop Joseph Perry the vicar of Vicariate VI. Valerie currently works with the Black Catholic Initiative.



Happy Silver Jubilee to
U.S. Catholic Bishop Joseph Nathaniel Perry
as he celebrates 25 years as the
Episcopal Vicar of Vicariate VI for the
Archdiocese of Chicago.

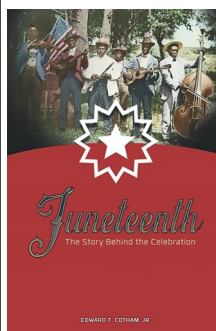
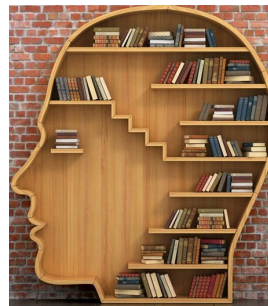


- ◆ Born April 18, 1948
- ◆ Ordained priest: May 24, 1975
- ◆ Appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago and Titular Bishop of Lead, May 5, 1998
- ◆ Ordained Auxiliary Bishop: June 29, 1998
Episcopal Vicar – Vicariate VI
- ◆ Chairman – USCCB Committee on African American Affairs
- ◆ Adjunct Professor of Canon Law – University of St. Mary of the Lake Seminary - Mundelein

Thank you for serving God and God's people. May your ministries continue to be blessed!



Literary Corner

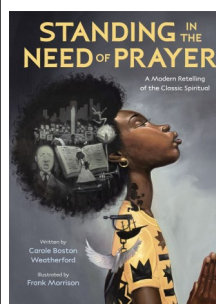


As the story goes, on June 19, 1865, General Gordon Granger of the Union Army entered Galveston, Texas and read General Order number 3 to proclaim that slavery is abolished by rule of law. All slaves were declared to be free by this order. This was done because Texas was the last Confederate State to surrender to the Union and slaves in Texas were uninformed or ignorant of their situation.

In this book, "*Juneteenth: The Story Behind the Celebration*", Civil War and Texas historian Edward Cotham interrogates this account and pushes it past the basic oversimplified narrative that the public is fed. Cotham, who has roots in Chicago being a University of Chicago alum, examines most of the relevant events of the Civil War that ties into the Juneteenth moment. He examines the use of general orders during that time when Union Armies captured Confederate Cities. He analyzes Texas and their role in the Civil War. He talks about the enlistment of blacks in the Union Army and their presence in Texas. And he even breaks down the history of General Gordon Granger, the man centered around the Juneteenth event.

I appreciate the educational history of this book because it breaks the narrative that some white savior came to Texas and told the ignorant slaves that they were free. Yes, slavery was eventually abolished but it was not the easy road as it was told to us. The emancipation of slavery in Texas was a long and arduous road. This book helps me better understand the history of Juneteenth, which I can appreciate the holiday even more.

-Gardis Watts



By taking an old spiritual and making it relatable to a modern audience, author Carole Boston Weatherford and illustrator Frank Morrison takes both the history and musical culture of the African American experience and creates this rich, visual tour de force that gains *Standing in the Need of Prayer: A Modern Retelling of the Classical Spiritual* the 2023 Coretta Scott King award for illustration. From images of the enslaved to preachers lifting up praise, the refrain of "standing in the need of prayer" is the constant pulse of this title. The history of triumphs and tragedies, determination and perseverance from those long gone to the activists today, this text provides a simple introduction of those events that leads to the young reader today always standing in the need of prayer.

- Tina L Carter

Habari gani

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- ◆ *Know Your Faith* with Deacon Kurt Davis
- ◆ *Writing* with Fr. Lee
- ◆ *What Just Happened?* with Fr. Tom Jackson O.P.

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Fr. Michael Trail hosts this weekly half-hour program that explores a wide range of topics relevant to Chicago's Black and Catholic communities. Fr. Trail is pastor at St. Thomas the Apostle Parish.



DC YOUNG FLY



J IVY

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SATURDAY, JUNE 17 - EXPUNGEMENT FORUM @ 10AM-1PM
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Send us an email at

chicagoblackcatholics@gmail.com about what the ministry or event is and how it is impacting you and the communities that you serve.

Please include any photos and we will feature it in our next issue !



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Habari gani What's the News?



Artist Credit: Edward L. Hayes, "Passing of Wisdom"

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The Augustus Tolton Pastoral Ministry Program provides an opportunity for Black Catholics to receive academic, personal, spiritual and professional education and training in preparation for professional ministry for the specific needs of Black Catholics.

- Applicants from the Archdiocese of Chicago are eligible for a full-tuition scholarship.
- Applicants outside of the Chicago dioceses are encouraged to apply for the Tolton program and will be considered for other scholarship funds.

For More information or to apply visit us online at ctu.edu/Toltonprogram



Write the Vision
A PROPHETIC CALL TO THRIVE

CONGRESS XIII

July 20 - 23, 2023 | Gaylord National Harbor, MD

Father's Day Prayer

Heavenly Father,

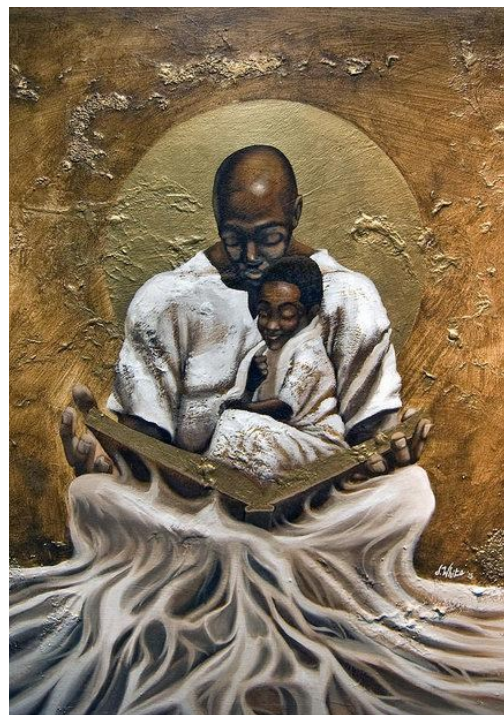
As we observe Father's Day, we ask that you lift all the fathers of the world up to you with adoration and love. Fathers play many roles in the lives of their children. They are providers, caregivers and mentors and so much more. They also provide a firm foundation from which children grow and mature.

Bless all the fathers who have taken upon themselves the responsibility of parenting. Bless all the fathers, those married, single or widowed. They all need your guidance and blessings. Help them to be a father like You are. Smile on them and be gracious to them and show them your mercy, grace and favor.

And bless the grandfathers, Godfathers and father figures for they too are providing guidance, love and inspiration. Strengthen all the fathers with love and faithfulness so that their children flourish and grow in joy. Bless those whose fathers are with you in heaven.

In Jesus name, Amen

-Tanya Bolen



Source: <https://www.blackartdepot.com/products/rooted-foundation-jerome-white>

Who are we?

Created by current and former Tolton scholars, **The Pulse** is a monthly newsletter to provide information about the concerns and happenings in Black Catholic Chicago. It will be made up of articles, profiles and information about events and programs happening throughout the archdiocese of Chicago. If you are interested in contributing or have any questions or concerns please email us at chicagoblackcatholics@gmail.com

This month's contributors are:

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This is a publication of the Chicago Black Catholic Alliance!

