



Where Have All the Black Catholics Gone?

by Gardis Watts



(Corpus Christi Church on 49th and Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. closed after 120 years.)

Chicago was once the center of the Black Catholic community in the United States. Not only did it cultivate Black Catholic leaders in this city like Augustus Tolton, Arthur Falls, George Clemens, and many others, but it was a city that housed the most Black Catholics in the country. According to Matthew Cressler, a professor of religious studies at the College of Charleston, there were an estimate of 80,000 Black Catholics in Chicago in 1975. In a report from a Black Catholic Convocation held in 2000 at the De La Salle Institute in Chicago, there was a rough estimate between 65,000 and 100,000 Black Catholics in Chicago in 1982. At that time in 1982, that would have been the largest group of Black Catholics in one city in the United States. Fast Forward to today. In a March 2021 interview with the Chicago Crusader, Cliff Barber, Chief Strategy Officer for the archdiocese and director of the Black Catholic Initiative, reported 6,000 Mass attending Black Catholics in the city.

There are many reasons why these numbers sunk to a horrifying level. It has been discussed in many forms, case studies and symposiums. We can come up with several reasons why Blacks are leaving the Catholic Church. However, the question at hand is not “why” but “where.” When Blacks are leaving the Catholic Church in Chicago, where do they end up? Two destinations come to mind when it deals with this question.

The first destination basically deals with different religious affiliation. Most of this can be answered in a Pew Research report called, “Faith Among Black Americans.” Released in February of 2021, this report is a study and survey of Black Americans and their religious experiences. According to the report, about 24% of those Blacks raised as Catholics have currently identified as Protestant. About 19% of those raised as Catholic have now identified as unaffiliated. This is in stark comparison where only 1% of those raised Protestant currently identified as Catholic. So according to the study, it is more likely for a Black Catholic to convert to Protestant than it is a Black Protestant to convert to Catholicism. So, when the numbers are put into context, it is probable that Blacks leaving the Black Catholic Churches in Chicago are going to Protestant churches.

The second destination is more of a socio-economic issue. According to the 2020 U.S. Census, the Black population in Chicago was reduced by 10% from the last census in 2010. The numbers of the Black population in Chicago according to the 2020 Census ended up at 787,551. This is the lowest the Black population in Chicago has been since the 1950s. There are no definitive studies or surveys available to give concrete numbers on how this affects the Black Catholic population. However, it is more than likely that this decrease in the Black population in Chicago would affect the number of Black Catholics in Chicago. So more than likely, Black Catholics who have left the Chicago Catholic church have simply moved out of the city. Much can be discussed on where Blacks go when they leave the Catholic Church.

Nevertheless, when it comes to Chicago, more than just religious preferences plays into the dynamic of not only why but where. The dynamics of politics also plays a role in the reduction of numbers but also where do Black people land after they leave the Catholic Church in Chicago. A deep analysis into things like gentrification, Renew My Church, and other factors, requires serious study on how the numbers of Black Catholics in Chicago are trending downward.



Being Black in a White Catholic Church

by Shannon Ambroise, MAPS



I was born into a family of Catholics. My father is from Haiti, a country well known for its strong devotion to the Catholic faith, and my mother is from the Chicago suburbs, raised in the Catholic church, and attended Catholic school as a child.

I like to refer to myself as one who "chose" the Catholic faith due to me completing the RCIA program in the early 2000's and choosing to be grounded in my Catholic faith today.

My experience as a Black woman in a predominantly White parish has been good thus far. I've had the opportunity to meet and fellowship with many parishioners who have become lifelong friends, and because I worked in the parish office of the church I attended for several years, I had the benefit of being mentored by priests who taught me all there is to know about the Catholic church and the Catholic faith.

After completing my M.A in Pastoral Studies, I frequently thought about the great lack of ministries within my church that were geared towards people of color. This led to me starting a Black Catholic ministry group at my parish. Through weekly discussions, the main goal of the Black Catholic group was to educate others about Black Catholic history, and the many contributions that several Black Catholics such as Augustus Tolton, has made within several communities throughout the world. We also discuss Black current events, and a variety of books related to African American History and social justice.

It was during one of our group discussions that I learned about the treatment other Black parishioners and visitors received while attending my parish. It was brought to my attention, some Black parishioners were being stared down while attending mass, were not spoken back to after greeting other non-Black parishioners, and were at times dismissed while trying to shake hands with other fellow parishioners during the sign of peace offering during mass. Learning this not only saddened me, but reminded me no matter how far we've come, we still have a long way to go. Although I didn't personally experience this, it hurts me just the same because ultimately, we are all brothers and sisters in Christ.

Despite questions regarding why I remain in the Catholic church today, my devotion to God and my Catholic faith is what keeps me. My spirit is awakened by the homilies, I frequently participate in praying the rosary, and I enjoy adoration and learning about various Catholic saints. I acknowledge the need for change within the Catholic church, and I want to be part of the change that educates others on Black Catholic spirituality, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and most importantly the goodness of God.

Thankfully, everyday we wake-up is a new opportunity for change. It is my hope that the Catholic church as a whole continues to pray, seek God, and really take to heart the words of Pope Francis who publicly stated, "we cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in any form".

Shannon Ambroise is a graduate of Catholic Theological Union and Tolton Alum. She serves as a facilitator of St. Mary's Black Catholics in Evanston IL.

Sankofa Spotlight: Looking Back to Look Forward



In this Sankofa Spotlight to look back as the looking back portion of the word's meaning, I interviewed Arthur and Ann Eiland. They are long time and standing pillars of St. Benedict the African Church located in the Englewood Communi-

ty. They have been married for 70 years and have raised seven children, six remaining. As a result of their deeply rooted faith in the Catholic church, the Eiland's raised their seven children, catholic and they all attended catholic schools.

As a request to honor their parents and their faith tradition of being catholic, the Eiland's requested for their children to have their children baptized catholic. As the tradition would have it, it carries on. It turns out that even the great and great-great grandchildren are baptized catholic as well.

To get a little history and background of their catholic faith beginnings, Mrs. Eiland said she was baptized catholic at the tender age of seven. Mr. Eiland was baptized, received his first Holy Communion and confirmed all at Holy Angels Catholic Church. Though he had been raised catholic, he began to question the faith. However, he said that after some research and taking some philosophy and religion courses, he was convinced that Catholicism was for him. He, also added, that he does not agree with all the rubrics of the faith, but he pretty much believes in them.

They noted changes in the catholic church as far as the Mass being changed from Latin to English. They commented that another change is the racism against Blacks in the faith. Each said that it is not as strong now as it was in the 1950's and 1960's, but it was strong. Mr. Eiland even remarked that he thought being Catholic was only for whites, but over time, he saw it was for Blacks, too.

They both confidently said that they do not know of any changes they would like to take place as far as the catholic church. In fact, Mrs. Eiland emphatically said, "none"! She went on further to say that she would recommend it [the catholic church].

I asked if they had any parting words of wisdom and Mr. Eiland said after a brief pause, "it is all about love as it says in the New Testament. Not so much as sacrifice, but love. Love and do good for one another; love the individual and love yourself".

If we can learn anything for today from the Eiland's as Catholics and as Black Catholics, it is all about love. Thank you to the Eilands and their daughter Tiombe Alma Eiland for her assistance in getting her parents set up for the interview. It was an honor and a pleasure.

Contributing Reporter Latrece Winfield



Kianda Boyd, is currently an Augustus Tolton scholar at CTU and worships at St. Katherine Drexel Parish (formerly St. Ailbe Church), located at 9015 S. Harper Avenue.

Kianda was baptized into the Catholic faith at 3-years old. She describes herself as a "cradle" Catholic and states that her commitment to her faith and love for attending church were solidified early on, thanks to her father, a long time Catholic and her mother, who left the Baptist denomination

to practice Catholicism. Kianda notes that the tradition of going to mass with her family on Sundays, had a lasting impact on her.

She recalls that even while she was away at college, at times she attended the Catholic services on campus. After graduating from Lewis University and moving back home in 2015, Kianda admits that she felt like something was missing. Eventually she realized, "that something" was being in "God's House," and serving.

That same year, the late Fr. Larry Duris—the pastor of St. Ailbe at that time, gave her the opportunity to revive the church's youth program. In addition, he asked her to be a part of the pastoral council and the liturgy and leadership teams. Kianda feels that these appointments were a way for her, as a millennial, to help develop new initiatives that would "bring young people back to the church."

She went on to state that this invitation to serve on this level made her feel like she was a valuable member who was needed by the church and the community. Kianda points out that this type of involvement "IS" what the parishioners of her generation and the youth need to feel a part of the church. She says that it is important that the church take a genuine interest in what young church goers find important and relevant. From her perspective, while the church leadership professes a desire to appeal to millennials, their actions do not reflect this because the voices of the younger people are not being heard.

She asserts that when people of her generation try to share ideas, they often get "shut down," and are viewed by the older generations as being too aggressive. Consequently, Kianda admits that her enthusiasm to serve in the church has slowly diminished since 2015. Moreover, she states that going to church—something that she has always loved to do, is "not fun anymore."

Despite this, Kianda remains hopeful that one day groups of millennials will get together on a panel with multiple pastors and even the Cardinal of the Archdiocese, and dialogue about what the younger generation of Catholics really need to feel motivated to remain in the church.

In her concluding thoughts, Kianda spoke about how it is time for the church to see young people as the "gems" that they really are and to recognize how much they can contribute to the Catholic church.

Contributing Reporter Stephanie Garrison

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What's the News?



St. MOSES the BLACK
PARISH

St. Moses the Black Parish

331 E. 71st Street
Chicago, IL 60619
773.224.1022
stmosesparish.org



Men's Bible Study

Every Saturday beginning
February 5, 2022

7:30 AM to 9:00 AM

Join our men's bible study every Saturday at 7:30am. This is a place where anyone can come and find

friends, conversation and God. Bible study meets in the church.



LENT BY TEALIGHT
A WOMEN'S DAY OF REFLECTION

Lent by Tealight: A Women's Day of Reflection

Saturday, March 5, 2022
11:00 AM to 2:00 PM

St. Moses the Black Parish invites you to our 2022 Lent by

Tealight A Women's Day of Reflection in the Sandra E. Wilson Parish and School Hall 7120 S. Calumet Chicago, IL 60619. Hats are encouraged but not required. The day is for the women of our parish to celebrate the season of Lent together as a community. Contact the Parish Office for more information.

White Mass for Medical

Community co-sponsored by Calvert House and St. Thomas the Apostle
February 19, 2022 at 4:00 pm
Bond Chapel on University of Chicago Campus.



Are you a doctor, medical student, or work in the medical community Calvert House and St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church are co-sponsoring a White Mass for the medical community to come together and pray to ask for God's blessing on your important work.

You can RSVP for the Mass by calling Calvert House at (773) 288-2311 or register using this link: <https://docs.google.com/.../1N4N8NH0KZ6iPG4123.../edit>

We look forward to praying with you!



ST. MARY EVANSTON BLACK CATHOLICS

JOIN US, AS WE GATHER FOR A PEACEFUL AFTERNOON DISCUSSION, EXPLORING A VARIETY OF ARTICLES AND TOPICS RELATED TO BLACK CATHOLIC HISTORY, SOCIAL JUSTICE, MINISTRY, & MORE.

WEDNESDAY'S VIA ZOOM @ 2:00 PM!
PLEASE CONTACT SHANNON AT
STMARYEVANSTONBC@GMAIL.COM
FOR THE ZOOM LINK AND ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION



Our Lady Of Africa/Tolton Site
4058 S Michigan Ave
Chicago, IL 60653
(773) 268-1518

OUR LADY OF AFRICA FOOD PANTRY

Fresh fruits, vegetables, meats and non-perishable groceries.

Info for Thursday food pantry...

Every Thursday
@ 10:00AM - 12:00PM

Meats and non-perishable food

*You can only receive once a month, identification is required and no boundaries

4058 S Michigan Ave
Chicago, IL 60653

Info for Saturday food pantry...

Every fourth Saturday
@ 10:00AM - 12:00PM

Fresh fruits, vegetables, and non-perishable groceries.

44 E 41st
Chicago, IL 60653

Habari gani What's the News?

St. Benedict the African Church
THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN
ENGLEWOOD
340 W 66th St
Chicago, IL 60621
(773) 873-4464
<https://benedicttheafrican.org/>

HUSH HARBOR

Saturdays at 11 AM

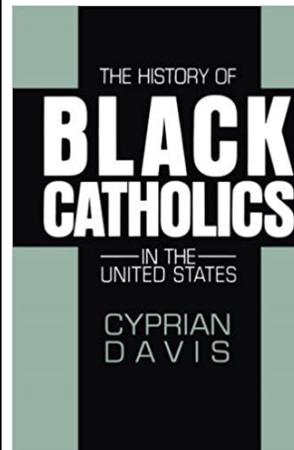
Our Hush Harbor series features spirituals and speeches from the past that speak loudly today.

In Antebellum America, a hush harbor was a place where the enslaved Africans would gather in secret to practice religious traditions.

MEETING ID: 89415895742

PASSCODE: 636489

Literary Corner



The History of Black Catholics in the United States by

Cyprian Davis

Originally published in 1990, this book is a comprehensive

analysis of the historical impact of people of African descent on the

Roman Catholic Church in

the United States. It starts with Africa's impact on Early Christianity, into the early European colonization of the New World, through the development of the United States and slavery, all the way into the 20th century. Davis not only delivers a thorough investigation of Black People's effect on the Catholic Church but also establishes the foundation of a lost identity that most Black Catholics are still searching for today. If there are at least two books a Black Catholic must have in their library, it's the Bible and this book.

THURSDAY
FEB 17
6:30PM

The Augustus Tolton Pastoral Ministry Program presents:

Follow Us
Augustus Tolton
Program
On



The RESPONSE

Where Have All The Black Catholics Gone?

A discussion on why Black Catholics are leaving the Church.

Dr. Kimberly
Lymore
MODERATOR

Dr. Valerie
Lewis-Mosley



Dr. Ansel
Augustine



Father
Michael Trail



Join us (**virtually**) at 6:30pm on Thursday, February 17th, for a panel discussion and dialogue on why Black Catholics are leaving the Church and what suggestions we can offer the Church during this Synodal process currently taking place.



Prayer for Black History Month



Good, Loving and Merciful God,

In whose law we find our guidance, in whose Love we find our healing and joy, and in whose will we find our peace, impart into our spirits the freedom of our ancestors who trusted You along their journey of freedom, courage, hope and victory. Empower us, O God, to be open to the seasons of life and give of our hearts to love generously to all in need. Grant us the silence of heart so that we can grow in your Word.

As we begin Black History Month, help us to never forget our history. Help us to remember the legacy of those who came before us – who not only paved the way but carried the bricks on broken

backs that then built the road. Help us to remember the songs, stories, and fiery hope of old men and little girls, granny midwives and marvelous musicians, great orators and leaders, entrepreneurs, and innovators – those who are earth-tone brown, black as night, fair like the sands of Egypt. We are kings and queens. We are descendants of royalty. Instill in us the willingness to share our history with our youth and others throughout the year.

Lord, when life gets hard, help us to remember You are the great “I am,” refuge and strength, and purpose for each new day. Help us to honor You with our work for justice, healing, and peace.

Now Lord God, fill us with the faith to accomplish Your great commission; but also provide us with the means and the will to stay in Loving and Joyous relationships with one another and the world.

Oh God, we thank you for the freedom that we have as followers of Jesus Christ, and we praise and adore you for the joy we have in worshiping you in spirit and in truth.

We say this prayer in the matchless name of Jesus Christ.

Ashe and Amen.

Who are we?

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:

- **Dr. Kimberly Lymore** DMin, is the director of the Augustus Tolton Pastoral Ministry Program at Catholic Theological Union and Associate Minister of the Faith Community of Saint Sabina.
- **Shannon Ambroise** MAPS, is a Tolton Alum, facilitator of St. Mary Evanston Black Catholics and member of St. Mary Parish, Evanston, IL.
- **Tina L Carter**, M.Div.; MLIS, is a public librarian, graduate of Catholic Theological Union and Tolton Alum. She is a parishioner, catechist and serves on the technology ministry at Our Lady of Africa Parish in Bronzeville.
- **Jennifer Davis** is a Tolton Scholar, pursuing a Doctor of Ministry degree at Catholic Theological Union, a theology teacher at Mount Carmel High School, Director of Liturgy, a parishioner at St. Thomas the Apostle in Hyde Park whose ministries include liturgical minister formation, Sacramental Prep, and Confirmation.
- **Stephanie Garrison** is a retired teacher, Tolton Scholar currently seeking a Masters in Pastoral Studies at CTU Seminary, attends St. Moses the Black Parish, serve in the ministries of Lector, Catechism and RCIA.
- **Gardis Watts** is a Tolton Scholar and part time seminary student at Catholic Theological Union pursuing a Master in Divinity. Current member of Holy Name of Mary Parish.
- **Latrece Winfield** is a part-time student (Augustus Tolton Scholar, M.A P.S. program) and a part-time library assistant at Catholic Theological Union; church affiliation- St. Benedict the African Church, ministers as a commentator and proclaimer.