

2017 AD

Holy Comforter-Saint Cyprian Parish

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Holy Comforter-Saint Cyprian Parish's African-American History Commemoration

MOMENTS in BLACK CATHOLIC HISTORY

(A Four-Week Historical Perspective)

Introduction for this series: Some people have criticized Christianity as a “white man’s religion and referred to the Roman Catholic Church as a “white” church. These myths and misconceptions are not accurate. In fact, Blacks in Catholic Christianity have a long and vibrant history and we will list some of those facts here weekly during the month of February. *(All information was compiled from websites of the Archdioceses of Washington, Baltimore, Chicago & Newark, the Diocese of Raleigh, the NBCC Newsletter and the books: African Saints by Frederick Quinn, The Saints Go Marching In by Robert Fulton Holtzclaw, Blacks Who Died for Jesus by Mark Hyman and The Anacostia Story: 1608-1930 by Louise Daniel Hutchinson).*

DID YOU KNOW...? ...that a former slave who worked as a hairdresser in New York more than two centuries ago, is on track to become the first African American man, canonized as a saint from the United States? Pierre (pee-YAIR) Toussaint (too-SAHNT) was born and raised as a Catholic slave in Haiti when it was still a French colony. To escape the slave rebellions that eventually drove out the French government, Toussaint’s owners fled, with him, to New York. He was assigned as an apprentice to one of the city’s leading hairdressers, and became quite successful. When his slave-owner died, Toussaint quietly supported his owner’s widow. She, in gratitude, freed Toussaint from his slave status. Toussaint later married and used his considerable wealth to support charitable causes, including work against religious and racial prejudice. Toussaint’s death in 1853, at age 87, sparked widespread mourning. Just 13 years ago, Pope John Paul the Second declared Pierre Toussaint, Venerable – the first step to becoming a saint.



DID YOU KNOW...? ...that the first African-American priest ever ordained in the United States, was born and raised in nearby Baltimore, MD, 150 years ago? Charles Randolph Uncles was the son of a B & O Railroad worker and a dressmaker mother. Father Uncles was an extremely bright student in high school and college. He broke the color barrier in Baltimore’s St. Mary’s Seminary, at a time when segregation within and outside the Catholic Church was the norm. Father Uncles’ ultimate achievement in 1891 made headlines around the country, including those of the New York Times newspaper. Two years after his famous ordination, Father Uncles became one of the founders of the St. Joseph Society of the Sacred Heart. More commonly known as the Josephites, this order’s mission is to evangelize African Americans, mostly in the United States.

DID YOU KNOW...? ...that the Oblate Sisters of Providence in Baltimore, is the first and oldest religious congregation for women of color in the United States? Haitian immigrant and educator, Mother Mary Lange, and three companions founded this order in 1829, when Maryland was still a slave state. Under great risk, these sisters dedicated themselves to serving orphans and educating black children. Also around that time, Mother Lange founded Baltimore’s historic St. Francis Academy. It continues to thrive today as a co-ed high school that educates mainly inner city African American and Hispanic youth. Mother Lange’s candidacy for sainthood began in 1990.



DID YOU KNOW...? ...that one of the pillars of the Catholic Church, St. Augustine, wrote 96 books during his lifetime? This famous son of St. Monica was born in Africa. The two most well-known books are *City of God*, and his autobiography *Confessions*. St. Augustine’s writings covered a huge range of subjects such as morals, history, philosophy, and heresy. Christian churches throughout the world have used Augustine’s works as major references. Pope Leo the Tenth admired St. Augustine so much, that he allowed this bishop’s feast to be honored the same as those of Christ’s Apostles.