

November 21, 2021

Please see this week's Bulletin for information about the Thanksgiving Mass schedule, the Christmas Program, and the upcoming Retreat schedules. Fr. Dan's Pastor's Pen also has information about this Sunday's tour that he will conduct.

The sign-up list for volunteering to help with the Christmas Program is now available in the church by Mary's altar. We appreciate any help you can offer.

This week we want to highlight another Black Catholic as we observe National Black Catholic History Month. This week we feature Fr. Augustus Tolton. His picture is displayed in front of the altar. Also, see pictures of Sister Henriette Delille and Pierre Toussaint who we have highlighted in recent emails.

Augustus Tolton was born into slavery in Missouri in 1854. His mother, who was raised Catholic, arranged to have Augustus baptized.

Years later, after gaining their freedom, the Tolton family moved to Illinois. There, Augustus met Peter McGirr, an Irish immigrant priest. Fr. McGirr allowed Augustus to attend St. Peter's Elementary School. The priest's decision was controversial in the parish. Many of Fr. McGirr's parishioners objected to a black student at their children's school, but Fr. McGirr held fast and allowed Tolton to study there. Later, Tolton continued studies directly with Jesuit priests.

Despite Fr. McGirr's support, Tolton was rejected by every American seminary to which he applied. Impressed by his personal qualities, McGirr continued to help him and enabled Tolton's study in Rome where he graduated from the Pontifical Urban University. Tolton was ordained to the priesthood in Rome in 1886 at age 31 and he became the first American Catholic priest who was known to be Black.

Eventually, Fr. Tolton was assigned to Chicago where he led the building and administration of the Negro "national parish" of St. Monica's Catholic Church. St. Monica's Parish grew from 30 parishioners to 600 under his leadership. Tolton's success at ministering to black Catholics quickly earned him national attention within the Catholic hierarchy. "Good Father Gus," as he was called by many, was known for his eloquent sermons, his concern for all of God's people, his beautiful singing voice, and his talent for playing the accordion.

At the age of 43, Tolton collapsed and died as a result of the heat wave in Chicago in 1897. Pope Francis declared him as "Venerable" in 2019 and this declaration set in motion the process of Fr. Augustus Tolton possibly being declared "Blessed" and ultimately, "Saint."

Hopefully you will enjoy a happy Thanksgiving!

The Parish Staff