



**Write the Vision: A
Prophetic Call to Thrive**

Congress XIII 2023

**PASTORAL PLAN
OF ACTION**



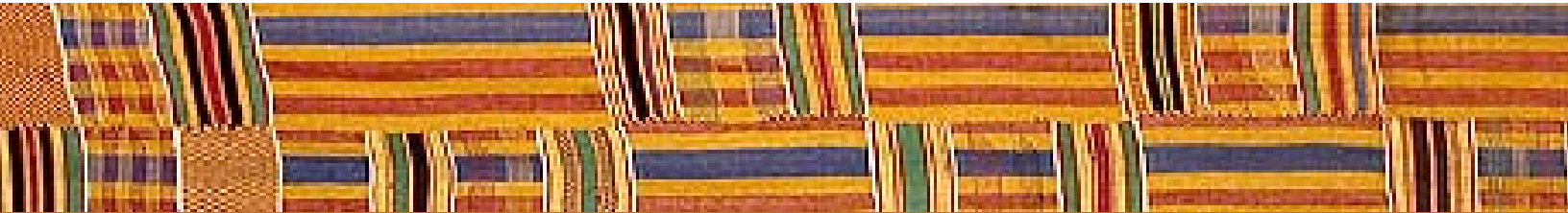
**The National
BLACK CATHOLIC
Congress**



*Just so, your light must shine before others,
that they may see your good deeds and glorify your
heavenly Father.*

Matthew 5:16





Eucharistic Adoration was held on Saturday, July 22, 2023, and met with great enthusiasm from the young adults present.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Introduction.....3
- Elements of a Pastoral Plan
 - I. Listening to the Voice of the People: What Congress Participants Said and Shared During Congress XIII, Including the Survey.....5
 - II. Stepping Back to Move Forward – A Sankofa Moment: National Black Catholic Congress History and Connecting to the Legacy.....7
- Pastoral Strategies and Diocesan Initiatives -- Topic One: Understanding Our History and the Significance of the NBCC Movement..... 18
- III. Reconnecting With Congress XIII Theme and Inspiration: We Were Called to “Make Strong and Rebuild” 19
- Pastoral Strategies and Diocesan Initiatives – Topic Two: Understanding the Role that Scripture Has in Guiding Our Mission and Ministries 21
- IV. Exploring Actions as A Response to Our Prophetic Call to Thrive – Rebuilding and Making Strong..... 22
- V. Showcasing Some Suggested Ideas and Resources 32
- Acknowledgements..... 42



INTRODUCTION

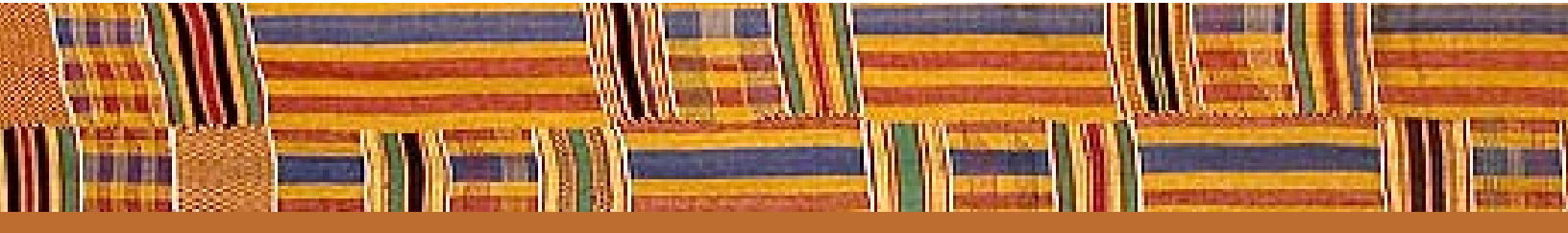
NATIONAL BLACK CATHOLIC CONGRESS XIII **Write the Vision: A Prophetic Call to Thrive** **Pastoral Plan**

*God is always speaking somewhere...we must go to that place and listen
...and act prophetically.*

The Office and Board of the National Black Catholic Congress offers a Plan of Pastoral Action in this very first month of 2024... one hundred and thirty-five years to date from the very first Colored Catholic Congress. That first Congress was held in Washington D.C at St. Augustine Church from January 1-4, 1889. Moving in the rhythms of our ancestors of faith, present day Black Catholics gathered from all over the United States from July 20 to 23, 2023 near Washington D.C. for the thirteenth National Black Catholic Congress. We paused again to listen to God's deep and transforming voice and to act in ways that say, "We know Jesus". That old time spiritual crept into our hearts and in the rooms of the Congresses of the past and of today, beckoning us to "Hush, Hush Somebody's callin' mah name... Oh mah Lawd, Oh mah Lawd, what shall I do?" The question still lingers among us, "What shall we do?" What do people of faith do in such a time like this as we boast about being followers of Jesus?

Now, the thirteenth National Black Catholic Congress is behind us and a new year is ahead of us. What shall we do? What does this mean for us? It's time for us to make a move--a full thrust of actions and possibilities await us to follow Jesus as He says, "Come follow Me". In doing so, Jesus lights a flame of mission and service within us. Jesus invites us into His mission and we make the decision to follow Him by investing ourselves in doing good. That is what "Come follow Me" is all about. That is what the National Black Catholic Congress Pastoral Plan is all about--following Jesus. The NBCC Pastoral Plan is another opportunity for us to re-visit our Christian vocation and ask ourselves "What shall we do in such a time like this where many challenges abound?" However, it is in such a time like this whereby God's grace keeps pace with whatever we face. God's promises are no secret. God's availability is eternal and God is fully attentive to us and our needs. When we step into Jesus' mission and act accordingly, we grow closer to God. We also grow in strength, for "The closer we are to God, the stronger our soul force".

It is the hope of this Congress XIII Pastoral Plan to provide inspiration and enthusiasm in our mission to be prophetic and thrive as we follow Jesus. It brings truth to the reality that the future is not just achieved in one event but through many acts of follow-up in mission and service from committed folks. The hope and strength of the Congress movement is to inspire an increase of pastoral and missionary activity. Those who are involved give evidence that the consequences of the Congress movement lives in their bones.



Many folks left the Congress and were on mission immediately. We congratulate and thank them! This document yearns to connect you historically to the nature and mission of the National Black Catholic Congress movement. It also reviews the thrust and catechetical teaching of the theme from Congress XIII, based on Habakkuk, “Write the Vision: A Prophetic Call to Thrive”. It provides a plan to engage all people to join in the work of the Congress movement, even if they were not present at Congress but are faithful to the mission of Jesus. Finally, this NBCC Pastoral Plan showcases ideas and resources that abound in our Black Catholic Community and beyond to address our Mission for these times.

Many of you take your Christian Vocation of Evangelization and Service seriously. Hopefully you will find something here that speaks to your heart and enriches your current mission. In doing so, you join others through the NBCC Pastoral Plan implementation process to be on mission as you hear and respond to Jesus’ invitation to “Come Follow Me”. This is how we stand strong in becoming prophetic so that we thrive in Mission under the Grace of God. Let’s remember these words from the Prophet Joel: “*And the Lord said, You shall know that I am in your midst Israel: I am the Lord, your God, and there is no other. My people shall nevermore be put to shame. **Afterward** I will pour out my spirit upon all mankind. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old ones shall dream dreams and your young ones shall see visions. In those days, I your God will work wonders*” (Joel 2:27;2:1 and 3).

Our God stands ready to work within you, generously planting inside of you dreams and visions. God knows your heart. He created you for such a time like this. Come, follow Jesus and see how your God will work those wonders that He promised. In closing, here is an African proverb from Burundi: “*If God gives something, He gives life with it*”.

To begin constructing the Pastoral Plan, let’s first look at the elements that need to be included:

ELEMENTS OF THE CONGRESS XIII PASTORAL PLAN

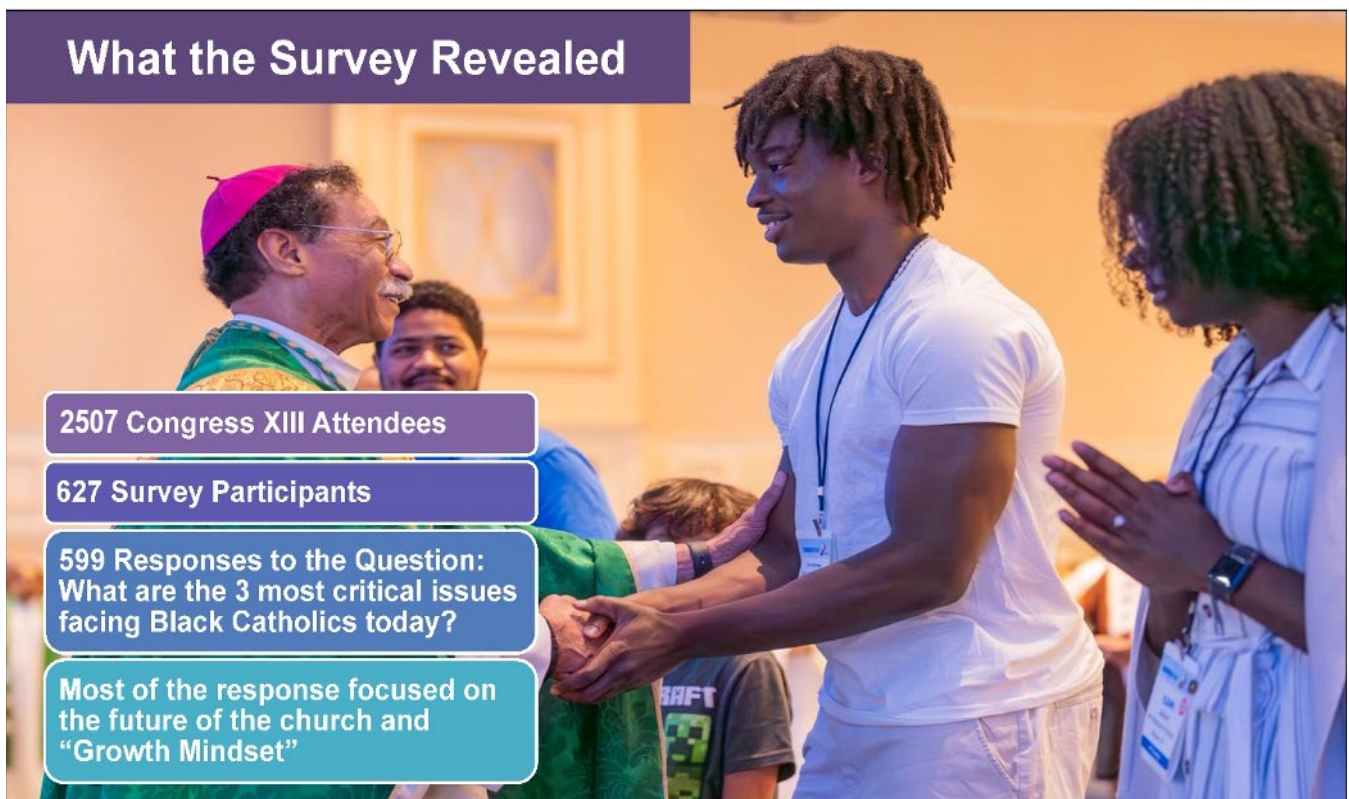
 <p>I. Listening to The Voice of the People (What Congress participants said and shared during Congress XIII, including the survey.)</p>	 <p>II. Stepping Back to Move Forward (Moments of Congress history and connecting to the legacy.)</p>	 <p>III. Reconnecting with Congress XIII Theme and Inspiration (We were called to “Make Strong and Rebuild.”)</p>
 <p>IV. Exploring Actions as a Response to Our Prophetic Call to Thrive: Under the call to “Make Strong and Rebuild</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PRAYER 2. CATECHESIS 3. MISSIONARY ACTIVITY 		 <p>V. Showcasing Ideas and Resources</p>

ELEMENTS OF THE NBCC PASTORAL PLAN

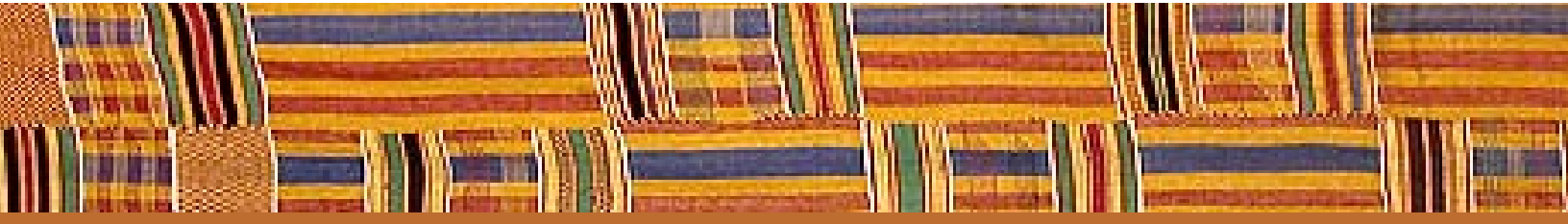
I. Listening to the Voice of the People: What Congress Participants Said and Shared During Congress XIII, Including the Survey

For the first time in our Congress history, we conducted a survey of all NBCC participants - Laity, Consecrated Religious, and Clergy. The purpose of the survey was to gather data on who was attending Congress and what were their concerns. No survey is perfect. However, the findings were compelling and help drive pastoral planning for the future. The participants of the survey were asked to share their gender, race, vocation, age, Congress history, and how often they go to Mass. Here are the demographics of the survey respondents:

1. 627 of 2,507 attendees completed the survey, and most identified as Black/African American.
2. Respondents were from dioceses across the country.
3. Of the 593 responses received to the question, “What is your vocation?”, 81% were laity, 13% were clergy, and 6% were consecrated religious.
4. Asked the question “What is your gender?”, 70% responded they were female and 30% were male.



During Congress XIII, NBCC President, Bishop Roy E. Campbell, Jr., congratulated young adults who are considering vocations to the priesthood or consecrated religious life.

- 
5. Of the 605 responses to the question, “How often do you attend Mass in person?”, 72% attend weekly and 20% attend daily. The remaining 8% participate monthly, more than once a month, virtually, on special occasions, or are not Catholic.
 6. Of the 604 survey responses to “What is your age?”, 33% were 66-75, 29% were 56-65, 15% were 46-55, and 7% were 76-85. Of the remaining 9%, 7% were 36-45, and the balance were youth or young adults, or chose not to reveal their age.

Respondents were also asked to share the three most critical issues facing the Black Catholic Community today and ideas to address those issues. There were 599 responses from surveyed attendees. The main topic of concern the survey of Congress XIII attendees revealed is the future of our church, going back to growth. They asked, "Where are we going?" "What will our church look like for our kids; our grandkids?" There is a great deal of concern about keeping the youth and young adults in the church.

The responses to this question about the critical issues facing the Black Catholic Community can be grouped into one large “umbrella” topic: We need to adopt a “Growth Mindset” as we look to the future of the church. Many of us are stuck in our patterns of day-to-day living. We must push against a fixed mindset to create a growth mindset. The following ideas may help you with this transition:

1. Conduct a survey at your parish or diocese to assess the local pastoral needs.
2. Based on the survey results, design ways to better engage Black Catholic men.
3. Focus on “generational growth”, especially with youth and young adult ministry.
4. Recommit to learning and celebrating the history of Black Catholics and the Congress Movement: NBCC Documentary <https://youtu.be/tl7W7-xdtOo>.
5. Grow in our personal call to holiness of life.

In preparation for building your Pastoral Plan of Action from a “growth mindset” perspective, consider these questions:

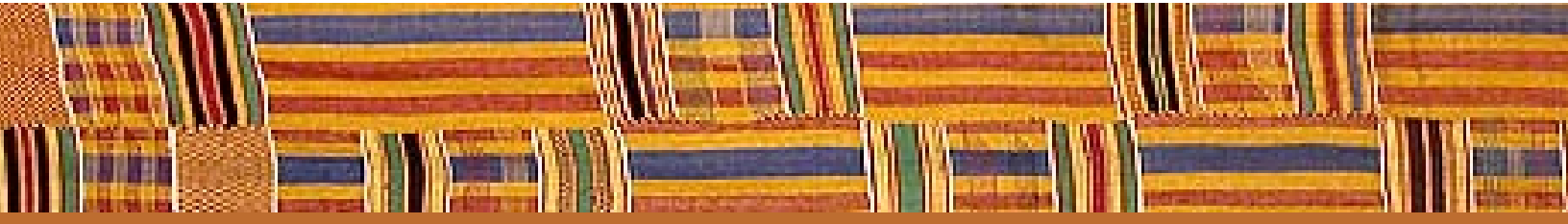
1. How are you growing personally? Do you make time for personal reflection, prayer, confession, adoration? I can't expect somebody else to grow if I'm not growing. We have to really lean in on our own personal story, our own personal understanding of what God is calling me to do, what God's calling you to do, as we begin to share this good news.
2. Who are you mentoring, in the next generation? Sometimes folks think, "Oh, I get it. You're trying to replace me." We don't cancel and replace people as Africans. We reverence the elders, but everybody has a season. They need to be able to know their season and they need to know how to transition. Every one of us should be mentoring the next generation. Growth mindset is not just simply starting a youth group. It's being very intentional about how, as you walk in the room, you talk about building back better. Rebuilding yourself, rebuilding that church, rebuilding our community at large. We are in the building business because God's still working on us. I'm a saint under construction. So are you.

II. Stepping Back to Move Forward - A Sankofa Moment: National Black Catholic Congress History and Connecting to the Legacy



The Sankofa Bird stands as a symbol as we review the history of the National Black Catholic Congress Movement. The Sankofa Bird is an Adinkra symbol known in many West African countries. The term Sankofa derives from the word “sanko” which means “to return” and “fa” meaning “to look back”. The symbol honors the old cultural values, practices and history of a people from the past. It is a symbol that stresses that history and old cultural values and practices are beneficial to our modern day direction and strength. These things are meaningful to our existence and should not be neglected. When we will look back upon the past, we see that we can and we will build a good and strong future. Notice there is something in the Sankofa Bird’s mouth. It is an egg, symbolizing that only by looking back can we hatch a new thing. At this segment of the National Black Catholic Congress Pastoral Plan XIII, we step back to learn the values, practices and history of the Congress movement. We do this to recognize that the legacy continues and we have the opportunity to hatch a “new thing”.

The history of the National Black Catholic Congress movement tells us that from the beginning of it’s formation, the leaders were prophetic as they wrote a vision and toiled the soil of evangelization. Under the vision of Daniel Rudd, the initiator of the early Colored Catholic Congresses a process of strengthening people while building and re-building a mission within the Catholic Church was drenched in their blood. The story of the Black Catholic Congress Movement bespeaks that folks in the past- infused by God’s spirit took on “**Personal Responsibility**” to improve the quality of life for their people within the Catholic Church.



They were building a ladder, building a bridge, so that we of today could climb up and over. They moved from one Congress to another, with the help of God, addressing the situations that folks faced so that together, Black people would have more life in life. They took seriously their answer when Jesus personally called them to “Come Follow Me”.

Here we look back in Congress History and ask the question, **“How have our ancestors of faith shaped our lives and mission today?”** Let’s take a look back and discover some issues and concerns that stretch through the 135-year-old Black Catholic Congress Movement.

First Colored Catholic Congress: Washington, DC January 1-4, 1889

At the first Congress in 1889, two hundred delegates met and recognized that “the sacred rights of justice and of humanity are still sadly wounded”. As a result, they mentioned the areas in which change must occur. First was education: “We pledge ourselves to aid in establishing Catholic Schools”. They singled out the need for trade schools “where the hand of our youth may be trained, as well as the mind and heart.” They called for literary societies “as a means of completing our young men’s training and attainments.” They urged the practice of temperance “either individually or within societies already existing in connection with the church.” They made an appeal to all labor organizations and trade unions, etc. to admit Colored men within their ranks: “We appeal to all factory owners and operators, telegraph and railroad companies, store and shopkeepers, to give employment to Colored people... without discrimination, and on the merit of their individual capacity.” They spoke of the children and the indigent and “the need for orphanages, hospitals and asylums”.

Additionally, Fr. Cyprian Davis, OSB shares in the book “The History of Black Catholics in the United States”, that the hope of the first Congress was to promote fair and decent housing, affirm Daniel Rudd’s Catholic Newspaper, The Catholic Tribune, by endorsing it and encouraging the inauguration of good works for the entire (Colored) people through the Catholic Church. William H. Smith, addressed the Delegates in 1889, and described the purpose of the Congress: “To talk about our needs as a people and by conference and consultation to try to devise ways and means of bettering our condition both religiously and socially.” In a significant moment within Congress in 1889, about one hundred of the Congress delegates met with President Grover Cleveland at the White House to share these issues. In Fr. Davis book (page 163) President Cleveland told the men gathered that “good religious people were a powerful help to the government and administration of a nation.”



Daniel A. Rudd

Did you know that Black Catholics were the first to hold national lay Catholic Congresses in the United States? Back in those days in 1889, 1890, 1892, 1893 and 1894 they were called, Colored Catholic Congresses. Long and biblically soaked sermons were central to the gatherings. These were situated in the context of the Holy Mass emphasizing the Eucharist. Note the infamous photo of men standing on the front step of St. Augustine



First Colored Catholic Congress held in Washington, DC in 1889.

Church at the first Afro-American Congress in 1889. The first public remark given by Mr. William H. Smith, a resident of Washington, DC, was a definition of the purpose of the Congress: “We have come to talk about our needs as a people... and by conference and consultation to try to devise ways and means of bettering our condition both religiously and socially.” Our Ancestors of faith took personal responsibility to work. Mr. Robert L. Ruffin gave a response to Mr. Smith saying “I should of like to have seen delegates from the females for I recognize the work which women are doing to bring men to a higher civilization.” Is this where we adopted the “Call and Response” tendency noted in so much of Black worship and biblical preaching and teaching?

During that very first Colored Congress, Black Catholics from Ireland were also in attendance. We know this because a comprehensive credentialing process was taken seriously and was led by Frank Dorsey from Pennsylvania. I often wondered why this took up so much time and interest. Now I know. They wanted the right people to do a divine assignment--fiercely moved by God because a Divine decision had been secured revealing that God was on their side. An Election was held that determined Daniel A. Rudd from Cincinnati, Ohio as President. Rudd articulated a message that he previously wrote in the *American Tribune*: “The Catholic Church alone can break the color line, our people should help her do it (Davis, pg. 166).” Rudd continued, “The Catholics of the Colored race should be leaven, which would raise up their people not only in the eyes of God but before men” (Fr. Davis, pg. 171). Our Ancestors of the Congress Movement were girded in faith and willingly accepted personal responsibility of this divine assignment. They must have known and embraced the scripture in Psalm 31:19: “How wonderful are the good things that You, O Lord keep for those who honor You! Everyone knows how good You are.”

Second Colored Catholic Congress: Cincinnati, OH July 8-10, 1890

Daniel Arthur Rudd (1854-1933) served again as President of the Congress. Women were in attendance. A noteworthy address was made by Dr. William S. Lofton, a prominent Washington D.C. dentist, one of the first graduates of the Dental School at Howard University. Born in Arkansas in 1862, he converted to the Catholic faith as an adolescent in Washington, D.C. At that time, Lofton was a trustee of St. Augustine Parish. Lofton spoke to the issue of education, affirming, “I dare today to insist upon the education, manual, industrial and intellectual of our down-trodden race. Lofton spoke of the necessity of creating trade schools for black youth in all three areas. His point was that most trade unions were closed to Blacks and apprenticeship in a trade was practically inaccessible. Charles H. Butler from Washington, D.C., another Catholic leader from St. Augustine and a clerk in the Treasury Department, affirmed support in this major issue of the Congress in 1890 (Davis, pgs. 175-176).

Third Colored Congress: Philadelphia, PA July 5-7, 1892



Similar to the first Colored Catholic Congress, this image shows attendees to the third Colored Catholic Congress held in Philadelphia, PA in 1892. Fr. Augustus Tolton is shown at center in the front row (Note the inclusion of women!).

With fifty delegates, the 1892 Congress was held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The opening Mass was celebrated by Fr. Augustus Tolton at the nearly re-furbished St. Peter Claver Church. James Alexander Spencer (1849-1911) served and presided over the third and fourth Congress. Spencer was from South Carolina, and he belonged to the free black community in Charleston. Spencer had been a free black before the Civil War, and therefore, he enjoyed some status and prominence before the war. Spencer had been a member of the Reconstruction legislature in South Carolina from 1874-76. For a time in his youth, he had been a school teacher. In Fr. Cyprian Davis book, Canon Peter Benoit, early observer and writer who recorded aspects of Black Catholic life stated that James Alexander Spencer “as a most advanced Civil-Rights man ... wanted all, blacks and whites, to stand on equal footing, at least in the churches, if it cannot be done anywhere else” (Davis, pg. 185).

Two matters dominated the third congress: the question of education, particularly industrial and vocational schools, and the establishment of a permanent organization. Daniel A. Rudd raised concern regarding “the drifting away from the Church, young black men” (Davis, pg. 178).

Fourth Colored Catholic Congress: Chicago, IL September 4-8, 1893

This Congress was held in conjunction with the Columbian Exposition and was noted as the highpoint of the Black Catholic Congress movement. Also, in conjunction with the Columbian Exposition was held the second lay Catholic Congress in the United States, also known as Columbian Catholic Congress. It was held at Columbus Hall in Chicago (Davis, pg. 182). An important document of this Congress was created and composed by eight members of the Congress with William Edgar Easton serving as chairman along with Lincoln Valle, Frederick McGhee, W. N. Woods, Charles H. Butler, Daniel A. Rudd, Willis J. Smith (S.K. Govern's name appeared in the "Boston Pilot" newspaper but not in the typewritten text in the University of Notre Dame Archives). One important feature of the address is the balance between expressions of loyalty to the Church and rejection of racism (Davis, pg. 187). This Congress attacked discriminatory actions in Catholic Schools; questions surfaced regarding whether the Negro should return to Africa and the establishment of separate schools for Blacks. The Congress approved the newly created St. Peter Claver Union. Congress concluded with a Mass attended by 5,000 people.

Fifth Colored Catholic Congress: Baltimore, MD October 8-11, 1894



St. Peter Claver Catholic Church circa 1905

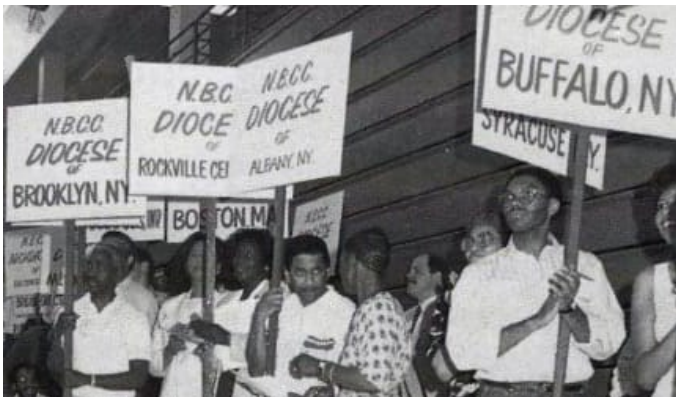
This was the last Congress to be held in the nineteenth century. It was held at St. Peter Claver Church in west Baltimore, However, there were meals and some other activities at historic St. Francis Xavier Church in east Baltimore. Fr. Davis writes: "Was this (it's ending) because the congresses had become more active and thereby more militant? Or was it because Rome itself became more wary of the activities of lay Catholic Congresses?" (Davis, pg. 193). During this Congress, Charles H. Butler addressed at length "The matter of the complaints of discrimination received by the grievance committee." Robert N. Wood, chairman of the grievance committee had sent letters to every American bishop inquiring about the treatment of Blacks in his diocese. It was decided that Robert N. Wood, (credited with organizing the first Black regiment of national guards in New York City (His son, Robert N. Wood, Jr., who owned a publishing establishment, would publish W.E.B.

Dubois periodical, *The Crisis* [Davis, pg. 190]) and S.K. Govern, should go to Philadelphia and "lay before the archbishops meeting in Philadelphia, the complaints that were received by the grievance committee. It is not recorded what response, if any, the archbishops made at the meeting" (Davis, pg. 192).

The President of this Congress was Dr. William S. Lofton who addressed the Congress stating, “We hope to hail the day, when American people, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and the laity shall rise up in their might and stamp out the prejudice which is destroying the life’s blood of this country”.

(For a more extensive study of the Five First Colored Catholic Congresses, please see the extraordinary and insightful work of Fr, Cyprian Davis, OSB in the book, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States*”, Crossroads Publishing, 1990. Additionally, Fr. Cyprian Davis, OSB and Sr. Jamie Phelps, OP wrote a book, *Stamped In God’s Image: African Americans as God’s Image*, Orbis Books, 2003. This book is a collection of letters pertaining to Black Catholic life spanning over 200 years. Several letters are penned by Daniel A. Rudd. These are two valuable historic treasures which we urge every Black Catholic to own. Another historic document pertaining to the early Colored Catholic Congresses is *Congress of Colored Catholics: Three Catholic Afro-American Congresses*, published by Daniel A. Rudd from accounts in *The American Catholic Tribune*, Cincinnati, Ohio. This publication can be obtained from the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.).

Sixth National Black Catholic Congress: Washington DC May 21-24, 1987



Congress VI “Roll Call” of attendees.

Under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, a call to re-establish the Black Catholic Congresses was brought to life in the 1980’s. It is said that multiple people and organizations were touched and inspired to reinstitute the movement. That’s how the Holy Spirit works. The dream and vision of a re-establishment visited the meeting rooms of many National Black Catholic Organizations. Laurence Payne from Houston, Texas gave voice to resurrecting the Congress movement within the sessions of the National Association of Black

Catholic Administrators (NABCA). Bishop John H. Ricard, SSJ was inspired and promoted the charge among the Black Catholic Bishops. The Black Bishops had just composed the Pastoral Letter on Evangelization titled *What We Have Seen and Heard*.

Eventually, the principal sponsors of the modern day Black Catholic Congresses renewed the Congress movement and established the formation of a National Coordinating Committee led by Bishop John H. Ricard, SSJ. The Sponsoring Groups included:

- The National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus
- The National Black Catholic Sisters’ Conference
- The National Association of Black Catholic Administrators
- The Knights of Peter Claver and Ladies Auxiliary, and
- The Black Catholic Bishops of the United States

The Coordinating Committee adopted the scriptural theme from Isaiah 6:8, “*Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send: Here I am; I said, send me!*” The passage in Isaiah speaks of a call to a special mission. The mission of Isaiah was to restore the people of God to full citizenship in the Kingdom.

The official symbol for the Sixth National Black Catholic Congress was the Acacia Tree. The Acacia Tree is native to Africa. It is mentioned in the Bible in the book of Exodus and in the book of Isaiah. The wood of the tree was used to build the Ark of the Covenant. It is mentioned in Isaiah as a sign of the Messianic restoration in Israel. During the Congress of 1987, every participant received a cross made of Acacia wood which Bishop Ricard, SSJ purchased from craftsmen in Africa.

Out of a deep sense of our history as a people and our rooted need in families, the 1987 Congress humbly and devoutly placed their efforts at the Congress in the hands of the Holy Family of Nazareth--Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

The moment came when 1,000 Black Catholics gathered at Catholic University in the first Congress of the twentieth century. Ten Delegates were determined from participating dioceses. In a deliberative, study and voting mission, these delegates developed a Black Catholic agenda for evangelization for the remainder of the century and to look at what form this might take in the year 2000 and beyond.

Bishop John H. Ricard, President of the Congress shared with Congress delegates, “In this Congress we must sense that we are being sent as prophetic voices, speaking on behalf of the Lord, to heal, to mend, to comfort, to build, to restore, to create a new kingdom of justice, love and peace. Our purpose is the development of a National Black Catholic Pastoral Plan so that our dreams may be translated into action”.

In an effort to build the plan, during Congress, delegates attended Workshops exploring topics on Black Catholic History, Culture and Spirituality, Vocations, Leadership, The Black Family, Youth Ministry, Community Outreach and Education.

Therese Wilson Favors served first as Program Coordinator then as Executive Director

Seventh National Black Catholic Congress: New Orleans, LA July 9-12, 1992

Bishop John H. Ricard, SSJ, President of the National Black Catholic Congress stated, “We’re a small voice crying out in the wilderness; but if We work at it, our voices will reverberate beyond the Catholic Church.” As a Church, this is the most effective way we can respond to the challenges of our times. Our delegates must be responsible for addressing the development of a diocese and parish structure to ensure that definite activities are planned, monitored and evaluated to result in the strengthening of the African American Family.



Bishop Joseph Francis, SVD, Auxiliary Bishop of Newark, NJ, (now deceased) gave the homily at the opening liturgy (Photo from In A Word archives).

Workshops explored the Effects of Racism on the African American Family, The African American Male, Pastoral Programs Supporting The African American Family, and Public Policies that impact African American Families.

As a follow-up of this Congress, Dr. Beverly A. Carroll, the first Executive Director of the Secretariat of Black Catholics at the United States Catholic Conference, encouraged the Congress Board to create a Pastoral Model for Black Families to engage themselves in practicing the principles of the Nguzo Saba. These principles are acquainted with the celebration of Kwanzaa. Thus, the Congress Office put together a document titled, *Rise Up and Rebuild*. Dr. Carroll also encouraged dioceses to explore strengthening the Black Families through a national effort called “Effective Black Parenting”.

Leodia Gooch, Executive Director

Eighth National Black Catholic Congress: Baltimore, MD August 28-31, 1997



The theme was “Evangelization Among African Americans: What We Have Seen and Heard, We Celebrate and Proclaim”. It was at this Congress that the “Mother of Africa Chapel” was unveiled at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC. This construction and positioning of a Chapel named in honor of the Mother of Africa, gave visual and intentional prayerful attention to the many children of Africa now living in America. There was no doubt that the establishment of this Chapel was an evangelization effort. Most Rev. John H. Ricard, SSJ called the Assembly together, stating “We commit ourselves to establish an agenda for the evangelization of African Americans; and to improve the spiritual, mental and physical conditions of African Americans.” A featured speaker at this Congress was Francis Cardinal Arinze, Prefect of Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments at the Vatican.

The Eighth Congress celebrates the opening of the “Our Mother of Africa Chapel,” located within the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC.

Dr. Hilbert Stanley, Executive Director

Ninth National Black Catholic Congress: Chicago, IL August 29- September 1, 2002



The Ninth National Black Catholic Congress celebrated a solidarity of purpose, from the general sessions, to the breakout sessions, the discussions, the prayers and the singing proved unifying under the theme of dedication and love.

The theme was “Leadership for the 21st Century: Solidarity in Action”. In a masterful and highly participatory dynamic, the 3000 delegates crafted “The Pastoral Plan of Action”, highlighting implementation suggestions around eight Principles including Africa, Catholic Education, HIV/AIDS, Parish Life, Racism, Social Justice, Spirituality and Youth and Young Adults. This was a working Congress, identifying key issues that impact evangelization within Black Catholic Communities. A Financial Collection was held to assist families and individuals who were affected by HIV/AIDS as well as to develop resources on this topic.

Dr. Hilbert Stanley, Initiating Executive Director; Valerie Washington, Concluding Executive Director

Tenth National Black Catholic Congress: Buffalo, NY July 12-15, 2007

The theme for this Congress was, “Christ Is With Us: Celebrating The Gifts of The Sacraments”. It’s hope was to help Black Catholics articulate how the sacraments and sacramental life, as gifts from Christ, are connected to our contribution to the Church and the world through our Core Principles which were developed at Congress IX as an expression of our proclamation of the Gospel. The celebration of the sacraments, and our understanding of the Church as a sacrament is a constitutive part of the proclamation of the Gospel. If we cannot relate these gifts from Christ to our Core Principles, then we are missing a fundamental element of our Catholic faith. If we do not appreciate the gifts that we have received from Christ, then we are in danger of taking them for granted--something we cannot afford to do, as it is Christ who is acting in these sacramental celebrations.

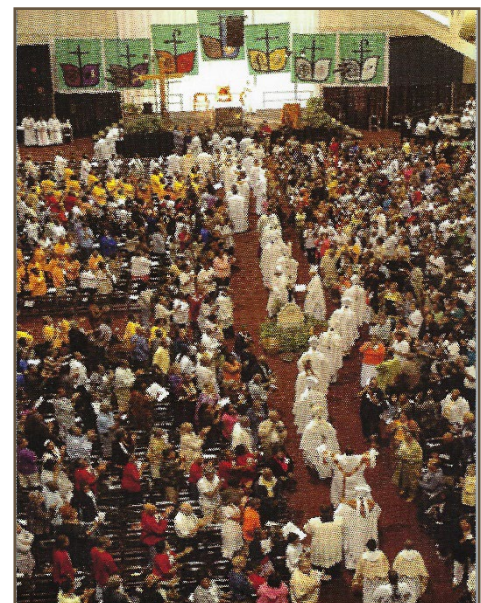


Photo of the Procession of Bishops and Clergy

During this Congress workshops revolving around the Core Principles were held. They were led by Black Catholic Leaders who were identified to provide pastoral study and initiatives during the interim of the ninth Congress to the tenth Congress. These leaders came from around the United States and brought their study, reflection and possible efforts for implementation to Congress X.

Valerie Washington, Executive Director

Eleventh National Black Catholic Congress: Indianapolis, IN July 19-21, 2012



The Congress XI gathering culminated in an awards ceremony where many “Servants of Christ” received recognition for their ministry to the Black Catholic community.

This Congress celebrated 25 years of gathering together as a Congress in modern times. The theme was “Faith Engaged: Empower, Equip, Evangelize”. The Congress celebrated the Black Bishops Pastoral Letter, *What We Have Seen and Heard*. It also celebrated Black Catholic leaders who are working hard to implement the initiatives of NBCC Pastoral Plans as well as those actions stated in *What We Have Seen and Heard*. The Gathering illustrated the gains met during the Congress movement. It also centered on the oppressive burdens still haunting our efforts of healing and renewal warranted for us to evangelize. We lean on the “good news” of the Gospel to bring hope and strength. This is needed so that we may press forward until the life and dignity of every person in the community is honored and respected. As in almost every Congress from the beginning of its conception in 1889, the hope of racial equality while battling racism became one of the most obstinate barriers of evangelization. The event culminated in an award ceremony, where those with distinguished ministry to the Black Catholic community were presented with “Servant of Christ” awards.

Valerie Washington, Executive Director

Twelfth National Black Catholic Congress: Orlando, FL July 6-9, 2017

The Theme of this Congress was “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me: act justly, love goodness, and walk humbly with your God”, inspired by Pope Francis’ plea to be immersed in God’s calling to dedicate our lives, mission and ministry through meditating on God’s mercy as well as personal acts of mercy.

Sessions included presentations on Healing Within Our Families, Reaching Out To The Incarcerated, Unrest in Ferguson, Biblical Basis for Social Justice, Racism: A Negative and Real Destructive Force, Understanding Mental Health from a Multi-Cultural Perspective, Dealing With Anger and Witnessing The Power of Love Taught Like Jesus.

Valerie Washington, Executive Director



During the final Eucharistic Liturgy at Congress XII, the youth track attendees came forward to be applauded by the assembly.

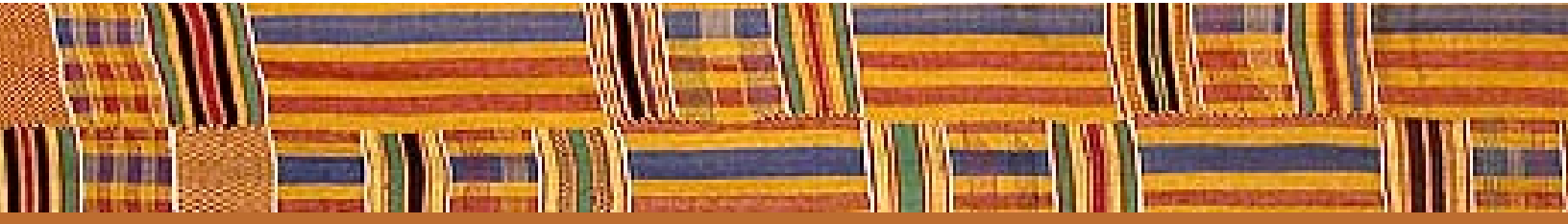
Thirteenth National Black Catholic Congress: National Harbor, MD July 20-23, 2023



Congress XIII attendees kneel and prostrate before the monstrance during Eucharistic Adoration on Saturday evening, July 22, 2023.

Convened near Washington, DC, the National Black Catholic Congress XIII gathered over 2,500 participants. Taken from the book of Habakkuk 2:2-4, the theme “Write The Vision: A Prophetic Call To Thrive,” was enthusiastically embraced by the Assembly. The Sacred Six: “Venerables” Augustus Tolton, Pierre Toussaint, Henriette Delille and Mother Mary Lange, as well as “Servants of God” Sr. Thea Bowman and Julia Greeley who are on the road towards canonization, were displayed as a sign that their memory and faith walk continues to inspire people of faith.

Most Rev. Roy E. Campbell, Jr., President of the Congress, challenged the Assembly to “live our faith, not hidden, but vibrantly and passionately, faithful to the teachings of the Catholic faith and committed to each other”. In doing so, a variety of Workshops were offered discussing avenues to be prophetic in hopes of thriving in pastoral, evangelical, catechetical as well as social justice ministries. The Black Bishops Evangelization Pastoral Letter was discussed, Campus Ministry, Evangelization Strategies Utilizing Parishioner Testimonies, Bible Study, Young People and Social Justice, “Keep On Teaching” Catechetical Fattening House,



Evangelization Across Cultures, Sojourning Towards Racial Justice, Embracing The Gospel Message of Life Amidst Troubled Waters, Preserving Black Churches Grant Program and Pastoral Lessons from Fr. Clarence Rivers, to name the few of the over 70 sessions provided.

His Eminence Wilton Cardinal Gregory was the main celebrant at the Opening Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC, as well as the Keynote Speaker, discussing “The Eucharist: Our Prophetic Call to Love” during the Opening Plenary Session. Dr. Omekongo Dibinga also served as a Keynote Speaker exploring the topic “A Prophetic Call To Thrive: ‘G.R.O.W. Towards Your Greatness’”. During this Congress, participants were transferred by bus to the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC, where a reception was held. The NBCC premiered its historical documentary, “Answering the Call to Thrive: The Legacy of the National Black Catholic Congress (<https://youtu.be/tl7W7-xdtOo>).” Attendees also had the opportunity to take part in a service project, “No Child Hungry,” which packaged meals that fed children in fire-ravaged Maui, and in Haiti. Bishop Roy E. Campbell, Jr. took a moment at the Closing Mass to call forward all young men and women who were considering a vocation to the priesthood or consecrated religious life. Eight young people came forward to receive a blessing from the bishops, and a prayer from the clergy and laity in attendance.

Valerie Washington, Executive Director

Pastoral Strategies and Diocesan Initiatives

Topic One: Understanding Our History and the Significance of the NBCC Movement

ACTIONS:

1. Encourage Families to have in their treasured collection of books these essential books...The History of Black Catholics in the United States”- Crossroads Publishing, 1990 by Fr, Cyprian Davis, OSB and “Stamped In God’s Image: African Americans as God’s Image”- Orbis Books, 2003 by Fr. Cyprian Davis, OSB and Sr. Jamie Phelps, OP.
2. Establish Parish and Diocesan Reading Circles to discuss Black Catholic History and the Congress Movement as a means of inspiration to identify what issues should be addressed and pursued to prophetically thrive on a local level.
3. Identify specific historical activity and places in your diocese and plan pilgrimages to those locations. Connect those historical activities to current evangelization efforts within the Black Catholic community.
4. Pray unceasingly and encourage the canonization efforts of the “Sacred Six” lifted up at Congress XIII.
5. Tell and Write your story of Black Catholic life and share those testimonies with others. That’s an evangelization effort.

III. Reconnecting With Congress XIII Theme and Inspiration: We Were Called to “Make Strong and Rebuild”

REBUILD AND MAKE STRONG...

...their relationship with God;
...a vision to address their situations of struggle; and
...the community at large.

THERESE WILSON FAVORS

PICTURED: VALERIE WASHINGTON
NBCC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



National Black Catholic Congress Executive Director, Valerie Washington, is pictured packing meals during the “No Child Hungry” service project.

A Catechetical Look at Habakkuk and Connection to Congress Theme:

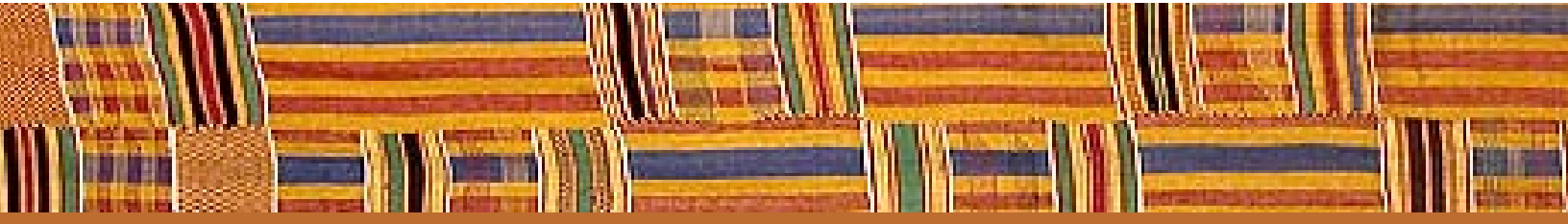
Therese Wilson Favors

Zora Neale Hurston once wrote that when you read a story... “You got to go there, deep into the story to know its journey, its rewards, its spiritual wisdom... Then, you will discover a unique perspective, an expansion of the possibilities for yourself”. So we pause, to discover those possibilities for ourselves through this Congress theme of **Write Down The Vision: A Prophetic Call To Thrive**. We go to God’s word to unravel new possibilities and spiritual wisdom. For we know that God is always speaking somewhere, we must go to that place and listen. Let’s go deep into this reading.

Habakkuk 2:2-4

Then the LORD answered me and said: ‘Write down the vision; Make it plain upon tablets, so that the one who reads it may run. For the vision is a witness for the appointed time, a testimony to the end; it will not disappoint. If it delays, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not be late. See, the rash have no integrity; but the just one who is righteous because of faith shall live.

Scripture Scholars say that the book of Habakkuk is written in a literary genre, something like a three chapter poem. The book talks about how God relates to his people, especially in times of challenge. It talks about a



person, namely the prophet Habakkuk and how he relates to God, especially in his time of trouble. Eventually, the story reveals to us the unending and repeated scriptural wisdom that God does not only care about our relationship with Him, but God cares about our relationship with each other.

The book begins with Habakkuk looking at his world, looking at his community, looking at his tribe and family. Don't forget, Habakkuk was a prophet. Prophets of his time were known as "The Nabi" a Hebrew term meaning "one who is called". A second title is "seer" which refers to the prophet's inclination to receive revelatory visions, in other words, A REVELATION.

Habakkuk's eyes were wide open and he could not unsee what he saw. He could not just close his eyes. After viewing situation after situation, and seeing one wicked act after another wicked act, Habakkuk became alarmed! Here's the deal.

Habakkuk was hot and bothered just about everything. He was flipping out about the behavior of the wicked, so Habakkuk starts to complain to God. He names the "woes" he is carrying. He calls out the "woes" by name. Habakkuk is sick of the misery floating in his midst, sick of the ruin he sees, sick of the violence. Slowly but surely Habakkuk finds himself questioning whether evil is winning. The Nabi says that culprits are running wild like rabid wolves. He's concerned that folks are storing up in their households what ain't theirs. Habakkuk is concerned of the consumption of things that folks have made into gods is inappropriate and it is not going to save them. He knew that the people were hurt and the people were acting out and being far from God. O' Habakkuk is alarmed, real alarmed!

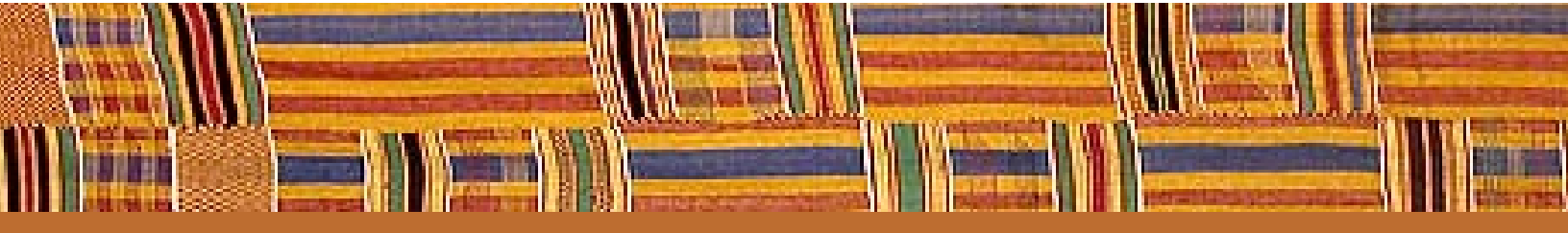
Habakkuk questions God: *"Too pure are your eyes, Lord, to look upon evil and the sight of misery you cannot endure. Why then do you gaze on the faithless in silence, while the wicked man devours one more just than himself?"* (Hab 1:13).

Where is God in the middle of a mess called Pandemic. Where is God when racism shows up and strikes down human dignity and human hope. Where is God when spiritual breakdowns run zigzag across my journey towards holiness. Where is God when incomprehensible evil strikes among our children, killing each other and shooting their parents and teachers. Yes, we should be hot and bothered; flipping out when we see the disparities pressing down on Me, You and Our People. O' Habakkuk is alarmed, real alarmed! WE should be alarmed, real alarmed too, regarding what we have seen and heard among our tribe in these days.

So, Habakkuk positions Himself in Prayer. He went to Someone who can do Something about the situation. The situation at hand warranted more than what Habakkuk had. He approached GOD (like what we are doing through this Pastoral Plan. We approach God for spiritual wisdom as we look at the issues impacting Black life now).

Habakkuk knew deep down in His heart that the more you approach God, the stronger your soul force. He went to a source of power greater than himself to deal with a breakdown of order and justice, a situation larger than himself. And then God acts and at that moment...a breakthrough comes into the ROOM.

After all of his complaining, Habakkuk continues: *"Then the LORD answered me and said: 'Write down the vision; Make it plain upon tablets, so that the one who reads it may run. For the vision is a witness for the appointed time, a testimony to the end; it will not disappoint. If it delays, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not be late. See, the rash have no integrity; but the just one who is righteous because of faith shall live' "* (Habakkuk 2:2-4).



God took the complainer who trusted in Him, the one who broke camp from the noise of evil and gave him new life. The reason why God told Habakkuk to make that “vision board” and trust in the Lord was to have a record of the wonders that God can do through faithful people. When You write down things, you make a list and check it twice, and once they are accomplished, you can give credit to the Overcomer as you overcome and move to the next step. God rains down a breakthrough. That is evidence that God makes good on His promises and those promises are no secret. God promises Habakkuk that he will live through the troubles and rebuild the broken places. God makes that promise to us too. We will overcome and we will live through the troubles.

Habakkuk acted like the prophets of our biblical history. He had a prophetic call and a prophetic vision. Habakkuk stepped into his prophetic mission “to make strong” doing what Prophets do. God called Habakkuk to move from **Alarmist** to **Activist** as Prophets do. The Prophet and the “Call to Prophecy” urges God’s People to:

1. re-build and make strong their relationship with God
2. re-build and make strong a vision to address their situations of struggle; and...
3. re-build and make strong the community at large

This gives witness that “God continues to make strong” both the vision and the people who trust in Him. It’s proof positive that our strong God appoints strong prophets to give way to a strong message sometimes in an urgent way. God always makes strong what is needed to encourage His people, to strengthen His people and their charge to Rebuild, Rebuild, Rebuild.

This is the work of the National Black Catholic Congress Pastoral Plan XIII as we journey to our future. Be encouraged, get to work. This is our time to move from Alarmist to Activist as Prophets do. Let’s remember these African proverbs: “Whoever is destined by God to prosper cannot be stopped” (Yoruba) and “You must act like it is impossible to fail” (Ashanti).

Pastoral Strategies and Diocesan Initiatives:

Topic Two: Understanding The Role That Scripture Guides Our Mission and Ministries

ACTIONS:

6. Organize and Provide On-Going Bible Study as a means of inspiration and spiritual knowledge assisting the impetus of how we answer Jesus when He makes the call to “Come Follow Me”. This is needed faith formation across every stage of life and within every generation.
7. Offer Training to Faith Formation Leaders (Catechists) that factor culture into the methodology and includes Black Catholic history and cultural values. Here research from Dr. Toinette Eugene is extremely helpful. The 30 “Keep On Teaching” Resources from the Archdiocese of Baltimore can assist.

IV. Exploring Actions as A Response to Our Prophetic Call to Thrive – Rebuilding and Making Strong



BUILD BACK BETTER
JOIN JESUS AND BECOME A
CORNERSTONE BUILDER

Let's build a Pastoral Plan that spells out and gives direction or ideas that...

- ...Rebuilds and makes strong every individual's relationship with God.
- ...Rebuilds and makes strong a vision to address the situations of struggle that we face today.
- ...Rebuilds and makes strong the community at large within our parishes.

Now we put on work gloves to get about the work of rebuilding. We call the faithful to respond to the Congress XIII theme and vision to rebuild in a prophetic way. Why? So that the Gospel of Jesus Christ can run, be glorified and thrive.

We meditate on the three rebuild strategies that Prophets are called to focus on. Here we ask diocesan groups to pull together Congress participants and leaders in the Black Catholic Community to roll up their sleeves and identify ways to rebuild and make strong their relationship with God and to rebuild and make strong a vision to address their situations of struggles. Additionally in this segment, we call the Black Catholic Community to discover what else we can do in our wider national community and to celebrate all that God has done and continues to do through the visions and dreams of faithful people.

In doing so, enclosed is a suggested activity that explores this discussion on Rebuilding. Please note that these discussions are patterned after Pope Francis' formula used during the recently held Worldwide Synod in Rome. That formula includes...

- i. **PRAYER --. Benedict de Moor says, whenever you begin any good work, you should first of all make a pressing appeal to Christ our Lord to bring it into perfection.**

- ii. **CATECHESIS** – *“Happy are those who meditate upon these things, wise is the person who takes them to heart! If they put them into practice, they can cope with anything, for the fear of the Lord is in their lamp” (Sirach 51:28-29).*
- iii. **MISSIONARY ACTIVITY** – Jesus said to Matthew, *“Come follow me”* and then in another scripture Jesus said to His disciples, *“It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to bear fruit” (John 15:16-17).*

I. Rebuild and Make Strong Our Relationship with God

Prophets always called folks to take a closer walk with God. As previously mentioned, the closer we get to God, the stronger our soul force. We need a strong soul force to be “about our Father’s business. Thus, this is offered as a Reflective Exercise for personal and group mediation and discussion. We begin in prayer. We remember that

St. Benedict de Moor says, whenever you begin any good work you should first of all make a pressing appeal to Christ our Lord to bring it into perfection.

Opening Prayer:

In name of the Father, Son & Holy Spirit.

Father, in the name of Jesus, we give all honor and glory to you as the source of our being. We thank you for all that you have done and commit ourselves to walk in your Word and thus letting it be the foundation for all that we do. We recognize that your Word is integrity itself, steadfast, sure and eternal.

We entrust our lives to its provisions, meditating on it day and night so that we may diligently act on it. Your Word abides in our spirit as an incorruptible seed producing fruits of the spirit. Your Word gives us understanding, discernment, comprehension so that we are preserved from the snares of the evil one.

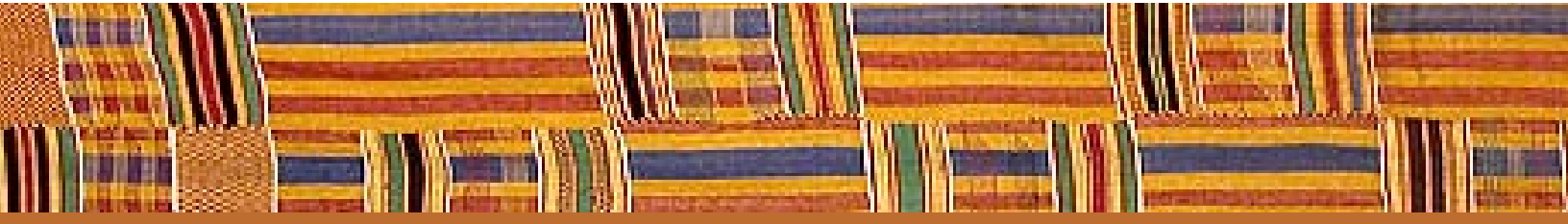
We delight ourselves in you and your Word. Lord, because of that we commit our ways unto You.

In the name of the Father, Son & Holy Spirit. AMEN.

Scripture Reading: The Two Foundations—Luke 6: 46-49:

“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ but not do what I command? I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, listens to my words, and acts on them. That one is like a person building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when the flood came, the river burst against that house but could not shake it because it had been well built. But the one who listens and does not act is like a person who





built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against it, it collapsed at once and was completely destroyed.

Catechesis: *“Happy are those who meditate upon these things, wise is the person who takes them to heart! If they put them into practice, they can cope with anything, for the fear of the Lord is in their lamp” (Sirach 51:28-29).*

Let’s begin our reflection by recognizing what is really going on in this reading. The disciples are feeling really secured, boasting that they “hang with Jesus, the Christ” and that they have been chosen. This reading is also recorded in the book of Matthew 7. However, this question that Jesus raises with His disciples is not “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ but not do what I command?” This is a critical question for us as we rebuild our relationship with Jesus. We must come to an understanding that Jesus’ commands are not suggestions from him but expectations from him. Thus, this question helps believers in their task of missionary activity in identifying a “Jesus” based effort in addressing the struggles of our time.

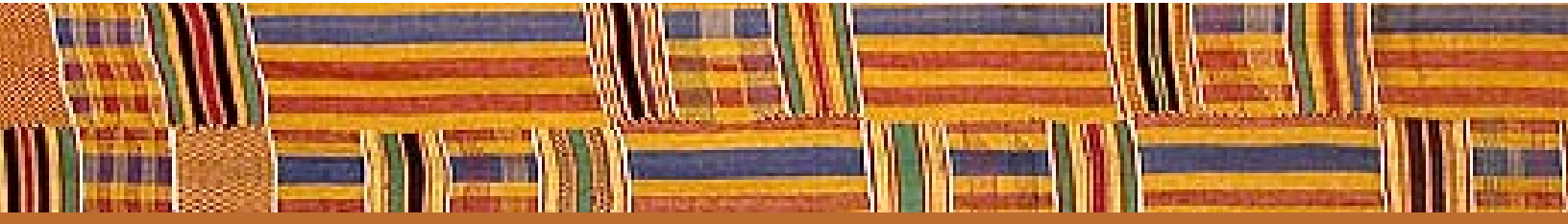
This reading is prefaced by Jesus choosing the “Twelve Disciples”. It is followed by Jesus ministering to the great multitude, preaching the Beatitudes and teaching about what real love looks like. At this juncture of the disciples’ journey with Jesus, I can see them, boasting that they have been chosen, they knew Jesus first, that they were the closest to the Lord. They were feeling “full of themselves”. As they reveled and reviewed the fullness of their time with the Lord, Jesus speaks to them with authority and get’s them to re-focus on mission with the question **“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ but not do what I command?”** Afterall, Jesus chose them for a purpose but did they really, really know what they were called to do? Did they “go deep” with Jesus? Had they asked themselves the questions: Why do I call Jesus, Lord, Lord? Do I do what the Lord commands me to do?

Let’s take our temperature right now and see why we call Jesus, Lord, Lord. Let’s see if we can identify who Jesus is and what Jesus has asked us to do. We hang around Jesus and we boast about his miracles and his teachings. But, are we doing what Jesus asked us to do? Do we consider Jesus’ commands suggestions or expectations?

Here’s the deal. We’ve got to get up close to Jesus and pitch our tents with Jesus and get to know the commands of the Lord. Then and only then can we build a strong house of missionary activity. If we don’t get close to Jesus, grabbing hold of his commands, then our efforts of rebuilding will be temporary with no solid strength, and the foundation would crumble like it’s on sinking sand. Let’s take a chance and do what Jesus commands us to do.

Missionary Activity: *Jesus said to Matthew, ‘Come follow me’ and then in another scripture Jesus said to His disciples, ‘It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to bear fruit’ (John 15:16-17).*

Let’s take our “temperature right now”. Take a minute to ask Yourself these questions:

- 
1. Who is Jesus to me?
 2. How can I grow closer to God? How can I help others to grow closer to God?
 3. What is Jesus calling me to do?

Use the answers to these questions to craft specific missionary activity within your parish and diocese. Eventually this will become a segment of **Your Local Pastoral Plan of Action**

Closing Prayer:

In the name of the Father, Son & Holy Spirit.

Lord, strengthen our relationship with you as we exalt your Word. Let our planning hold “your Word” in high esteem and give it first priority in our daily walk. As it is spoken in the Greatest Commandment...*Love God above all and thy neighbor as thy self.* We boldly commit our whole being to a solid foundation, the Living Word of God.

With a heart of gratitude we give you the highest praise!

In the name of the Father, Son, & Holy Spirit. AMEN.

(Prayers written by Patricia A. Waddell)

2. Rebuild and Make Strong a Vision to Address the Situations and Struggles in Such a Time Like This

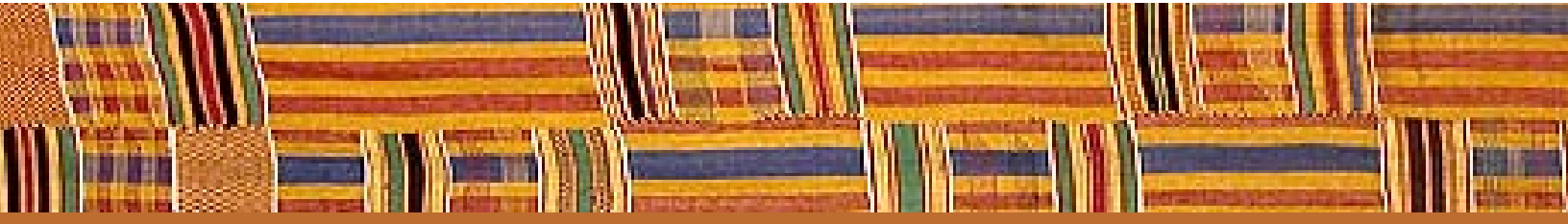
St. Benedict de Moor says, whenever you begin any good work you should first of all make a pressing appeal to Christ our Lord to bring it into perfection.

Opening Prayer:

Almighty God and Father, you have called us together to do a mighty work: to heal; to lead; to continue to teach and grow; and to rebuild and make strong our Jeruselums together in your name. WE SEE THE TROUBLE WE ARE IN.

We know it is no longer good enough to cry peace. We must work for peace, live peace, and live in peace. The changes we seek in our respective communities will certainly not come if we “wait for some other person or wait for some other time “ WE SEE THE TROUBLE WE ARE IN.

We know we must choose solutions brick by brick that instruct and construct, by thinking, creating, and acting for ourselves, using fewer words and performing greater deeds. WE SEE THE TROUBLE WE ARE IN.



We know freedom is something you take with your own hands. It is not handed down from one generation to the next: it is never secure, and we must never take it for granted. WE SEE THE TROUBLE WE ARE IN.

We know when we pray we must “move our feet“, committing and recommitting day in and day out to build together to the ends of our lives so that the next generation and the generation after will know peace. It’s not what we leave for our children, it’s what we leave in them. WE SEE THE TROUBLE WE ARE IN. Let us rebuild and make strong our Jerusalem together in our Lord and Savior’s Holy name. AMEN.

Scripture Reading: Decision to Rebuild the City Wall—Nehemiah 2:17-18

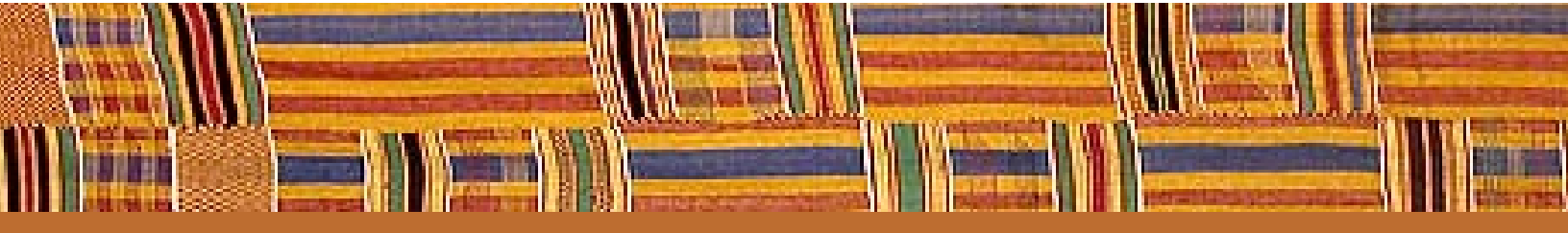
“Afterward Nehemiah said to them: ‘You see the trouble we are in: how Jerusalem lies in ruins and its gates have been gutted by fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, so that we may no longer be a reproach!’ Then, I explained to them how God had shown his gracious favor to me, and what the king had said to me. They replied, ‘Let us begin building!’ And they undertook the work with vigor.”

Catechesis: *Happy are those who meditate upon these things, wise is the person who takes them to heart! If they put them into practice, they can cope with anything, for the fear of the Lord is in their lamp. (Sirach 51:28-29)*

What I like about this reading is that Nehemiah doesn’t get overwhelmed about the ruins and the ugliness of gutted buildings before him. He knew what fire can do. But, He also knew someone greater than fire and what His God could do. Nehemiah was alarmed about the situation but not hopeless. Yes, Nehemiah steps into the mission because he knew that God had his back. You see God can do wonders when folks say YES! Who knows what Nehemiah may have seen beyond the ruins. He may have seen an opportunity. I like that. I also like that Nehemiah doesn’t respond by taking on the whole load of trouble all by Himself. Nehemiah pulls together a Work Crew. Nehemiah knew that the favor of God was upon him. He knew this because he had a relationship with God. That made Nehemiah hopeful and encouraged. As you read the entire book of Nehemiah, it is discovered that after time and hard work, Jerusalem was re-built.

You see, God has a way of moving a man and a people of faith from Alarmist to Activists. Hard stuff is evaporated into easy stuff when you trust in the Lord. Heavy work turns into light work when you lean on the Lord. When you live and act and serve in God’s ways, watch out! Here comes strength, here comes courage, here comes blessings! Why? Because you have prayed, and you have asked God for His favor. Then, the Holy Spirit moves in and sets up house within you. No longer is the Holy Spirit homeless, lurking outside of your temple: The Spirit done moved in!

Don’t let the troubles you see scare you or leave you motionless. You know Jesus and He continues to ask You to “Come Follow Me”. Don’t think that you are inadequate to take on such a big mission. As folks say in the Black Church, sometimes God does not call those who appear to



be qualified, instead, God qualifies the Called! You have been called for such a time like this to address the struggles of these times. You've got what it takes. Let's get to work with great vigor. You are the spoken word of "God's Imagination" (St. Augustine) and made in the "Image and Likeness of God".

Missionary Activity: Jesus said to Matthew *"Come follow me"* and then in another scripture, Jesus said to His disciples *"It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to bear fruit"* (John 15:16-17).

Let's take our temperature right now in regards to this rebuilding of vision as we address the struggles of his times. Let's ask ourselves: Do we really care about what is happening to our people in the community especially where our churches are? How can we build relationships? How do we address the disparities pressing down on our people? Do we really care about the most vulnerable among us? How many lives do we pass along on our way to our churches for services and we don't even see them? When someone falls, we are quick to try to pick them up but sometimes we may need to bend down low and see what they see in their view before we try to lift them up.

Therefore, we continue to ask important questions: How do we build coalitions with others and institutions yearning to address the same struggles? What would Jesus do? What do people of faith do? How can we move from being alarmists to prophetic activists? We have some resources and we need to share them and give some step by step, brick by brick ways to address the struggles. Do we take seriously Jesus' ministry as he encounters and engages folks? That's about Healing and Bold Preaching. We have social workers, lawyers, judges, community activists among us. Who are they? Can they give us ways to achieve and build and re-build? Can we join Jesus and become **Cornerstone Builders in His project of transformation**? Who else among us with hearts that imitate the marvelous mercy of Jesus can we engage with in and around our Communities? Can we become **"Personally Responsible"** and get others to become **"Personally Responsible"** to address the struggles of our time?

Let's look at these questions under the lens of re-building within our families, parish and community. Together, let's explore these questions:

1. What inspired You in this Prayer, Scripture Reading and Reflection on Missionary Activity?
2. As you look around your Faith Community, Parish and Diocese, what troubles You and warrants your attention?
3. As you look around your Community, what troubles You and warrants your attention?
4. How and what can people of faith do to address what is seen as challenges and troubles?
5. What coalitions and resource people within the diocese and community can we network with to address these struggles?

Use the answers to these questions to craft specific missionary activity within your parish and diocese. Eventually this will become a segment of **Your Local Pastoral Plan of Action**.

Closing Prayer:

Almighty God and Father, you see the trouble we are in. Bless the efforts of this gathering. Let our prayers unite us, as one testifying, as true truth that our communities can and will be rebuilt and unite in love. May all that was shared act as seed on fertile ground bearing fruit and fueling our next steps. May each idea, plan and prayer, brick by brick, work together to develop joint ministries, service and outreach initiatives meant to engage, enrich, and empower the people of our parishes and shared communities. We ask this and all things in your precious name. Amen, Amen and Amen!

(Prayers written by Howard W. Roberts)



On Saturday afternoon, July 22, 2023, students from St. Francis Xavier Catholic Academy in Washington, DC, portrayed five of the six Black Holy men and women on the path to sainthood, and NBCC founder Daniel Rudd. The part of Sr. Thea Bowman was portrayed by Valerie Lewis-Mosely.



3. Rebuild and Make Strong the Community at Large within Our Parishes: Tell the Story of The Wonders of God Through Dreams and Visions of The Faithful

St. Benedict de Moor says, whenever you begin any good work you should first of all make a pressing appeal to Christ our Lord to bring it into perfection.

Opening Prayer:

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Heavenly Father, we praise your holy name. We honor and give you glory because you are a God that sits high but looks low. We thank you for coming to us in your son Jesus so that we would know not only how much you love us, but that we would also know that you KNOW us. You know our strengths and our weaknesses. And Lord, it is in this time that we can boldly come to your throne to ask for your grace, mercy, forgiveness and guidance. We call on you great name for discernment for ourselves, our people and our world. And we thank you for it because we know that you will grant it to us in the mighty name of Jesus, our Savior and our Lord.

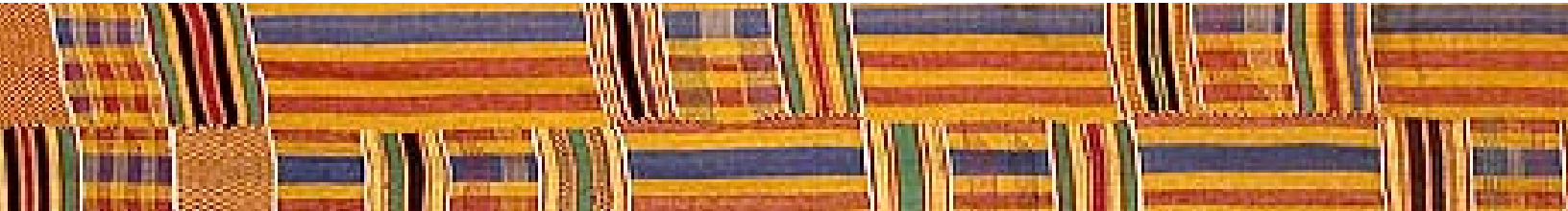
In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. AMEN.

Scripture Reading: Your God Will Work Wonders with Your Dreams and Your Visions—Joel 2:27; 3:1 and 3

*“And the Lord said, ‘You shall know that I am in your midst Israel: I am the Lord, your God, and there is no other. My people shall nevermore be put to shame. **Afterward** I will pour out my spirit upon all mankind. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old ones shall dream dreams and your young ones shall see visions. In those days, I your God will work wonders.’”*

Catechesis: *Happy are those who meditate upon these things, wise is the person who takes them to heart! If they put them into practice, they can cope with anything, for the fear of the Lord is in their lamp (Sirach 51:28-29).*

Let’s start off with this strong spiritual wisdom coming from the Word of God. Dreams and Visions and all that is associated with them are repeated often in sacred scripture. Dreams and Visions provoke change and transformation. God either initiates the dream/vision or God invites bible characters to join Him to cooperate with Him in his project of transformation. In sacred scripture, Joseph, son of Jacob interpreted several dreams for Pharaoh. One dream made way to feed thousands of folks during a drought- (Genesis 40-41). Moses saw a vision through the “Burning Bush” and heard God’s voice, (Exodus 3). Solomon got some deep and substantial wisdom from the Lord through a dream. In the dream...God said to Solomon “Ask something of me and I will give it to You”- (1 Kings 3). Job communicated with God through dreams. Daniel



saw a vision of the angel Gabriel while in prayer. Gabriel told Daniel... what you asked for has already been given (Daniel 9:20-23). How about Mary communicating with Gabriel in a vision (Luke 1). Then Joseph, the carpenter married Mary without a shotgun wedding. Joseph also had that dream to flee from danger and go into Egypt (Matthew 2). The Magi, after visiting Jesus as a babe had a dream and the Lord showed them another way to return home to avoid Herod. How about that vision Saul had when he was knocked off that horse. During that vision, Saul had such a transformation that he changed his name (Acts 9). These are just a few stories regarding dreams and visions from scripture. There are at least a hundred more Bible stories of folks encountering a “change around” through dreams and visions, including this one from the book of Joel.

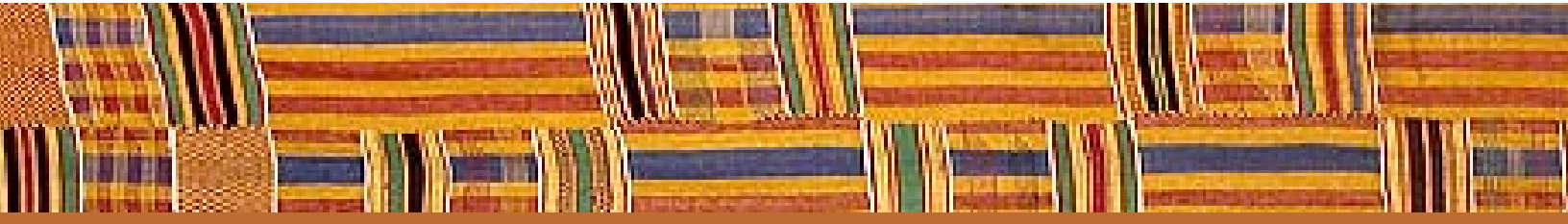
And the Lord said, *“You shall know that I am in your midst Israel: I am the Lord, your God, and there is no other. My people shall nevermore be put to shame. **Afterward** I will pour out my spirit upon all mankind. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old ones shall dream dreams and your young ones shall see visions. In those days, I your God will work wonders.”*

Here's the Deal, which I repeat again, God either initiates the dream or God invites bible characters to join Him to cooperate with Him in his project of transformation... through visions and dreams. It's all about purpose, change and transformation. Dreams help folks to get up out of whatever they thought they were in and make a move to do something significant, something new. In these stories from scripture these dreams and visions helped folks to discover or shape their purpose so that they could move to another level. God wants us to have dreams - ones that will flood our lives with God's grace.

Sometimes in our own life, when we dream... everything seems so real. It's full of movement and color and lots of action. Those who study dreams say that these dreams seem so real because they paint a deep desire for something buried deep within us... a relationship, a hope or a response to a calling.

We have dreams for our people. We have been involved with transforming projects within our families, parishes, churches, organization and within our communities. Those dreams came from God and you must have recognized that they came from God because you acted on them.

God has poured out His spirit upon you. God has planted some new visions and dreams in you. Embrace them as true truth from the Lord. Trust that God knows what He is doing with You and be ready to follow His lead. Release those dreams and visions into this world that needs some good, some hope and a new dream. **Remember that You belong to God. Take heart that you are made in his image and likeness.** Remember, God either initiates the dream or God invites bible characters to join Him to cooperate with Him in his project of transformation, through visions and dreams. God has invited you, through your visions and dreams to participate in his projects of transformation in this world. That makes You a Dreamer. That makes You a Visionary. That makes you an Overcomer. So,



activate your dreams. Let those dreams rise out of your soul and see what God will do with you. His promises are no secret. In our leaning and trusting... God will work wonders! The Word says... See the wonders that God will perform among some trusting and believing folks. Radical encounters with the Lord done through dreams and visions is a Bible thing... Ask Joseph, Moses, Mary, Joseph the Carpenter, Peter and Paul just to name a few. They were transformed and did some transforming things, in the name of Jesus. You can do the same. Dream on People of God!

Missionary Activity: Jesus said to Matthew, *“Come follow me”* and then in another scripture Jesus said to His disciples *“It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to bear fruit”* (John 15:16-17).

Let’s pause for a minute and look over your life and ponder these questions:

1. What dreams or visions that you have had for your family, parish and community have come to fruition through the grace of God?
2. What is a vision or dream that you feel God is calling you to put in place to rebuild our families, parish and community?

Use the answers to these questions to craft specific missionary activity within your parish and diocese. Eventually this will become a segment of **Your Local Pastoral Plan of Action**.

Closing Prayer:

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

We thank you Heavenly Father that you made us in your image and likeness. Because it lets us know that we are overcomers. We are believers. We trust in your word. We trust and hold firm to your promises. Lord, we know how you have equipped us for times like these. We send our prayers up like sweet incense for your blessings and we are leaning on the promise that the dreams and visions we have, you will bring to pass. We praise you. We bless you. We give you glory. We thank you for the promises of hope for those who believe in your word.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. AMEN.

(Prayers written by Sharon H. Winchester)

V. Showcasing Some Suggested Ideas and Resources

Some Helpful Ideas and Resources for Constructing Your Pastoral Plan of Action:

a. Black Catholic organizations in the United States:

- i. Black Catholic Theological Symposium: <https://blackcatholictheologicalsymposium.org/>
- ii. Institute for Black Catholic Studies at Xavier University of Louisiana: <https://www.xula.edu/ibcs>
- iii. Knights of Peter Claver and Ladies Auxiliary: <https://www.kofpc.org>
- iv. National Association of Black Catholic Administrators: <https://nabcacatholic.org>
- v. National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus: <https://nbccc.cc>
- vi. National Black Catholic Congress: <https://www.nbccongress.org>
- vii. National Black Catholic Seminarians Association: <https://www.thenbcsa.org>
- viii. National Black Sisters' Conference: <https://www.nbsc68.org/>

b. Catechetical Training:

Every Diocese in the United States has some type of Catechist Training Program under their Faith Formation Department or Department of Religious Education. Contact your local diocesan office for information. Below are a few of the online programs that are available.

- i. Augustine Institute School of Theology Short Courses: <https://shortcourses.augustineinstitute.org/>
- ii. The Bible: The USCCB has approved several translations of the Sacred Scriptures. They are listed here: <https://www.usccb.org/offices/new-american-bible/approved-translations-bible>
- iii. The Catechism of the Catholic Church: <https://www.usccb.org/sites/default/files/flipbooks/catechism/>
- iv. St. Charles Borromeo Seminary Catechetical Institute: <https://www.scs.edu/school-of-theological-studies/catechetical-institute/>

c. Catholic Colleges and Universities: <https://bit.ly/CatholicCUs>

d. Evangelization:

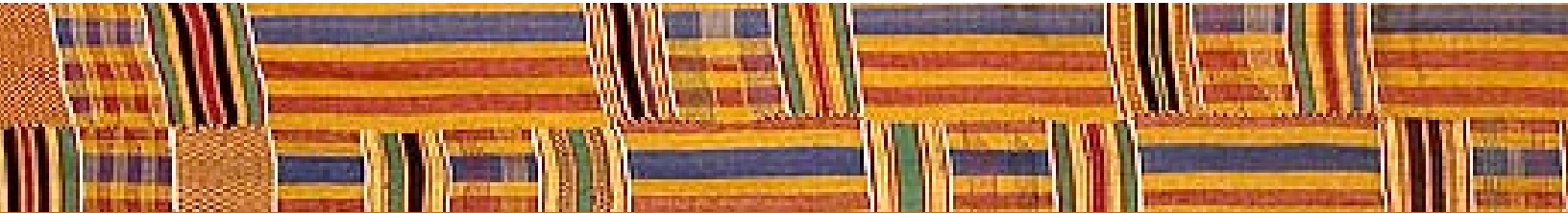
These are just a few resources that will assist in creating an evangelization program for Catholic parishes. These organizations may charge for the resources; please read carefully.

- i. Augustine Institute – Serving the formation of Catholics for the New Evangelization: <https://www.augustineinstitute.org/>
- ii. Black Bishops of the United States – What We Have Seen and Heard, a Pastoral Letter on Evangelization: <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/african-american/resources/upload/what-we-have-seen-and-heard.pdf>
- iii. Catherine of Siena Institute – Assisting Catholic parishes to become centers of evangelization and formation by helping individuals identify their charisms: <https://siena.org/>

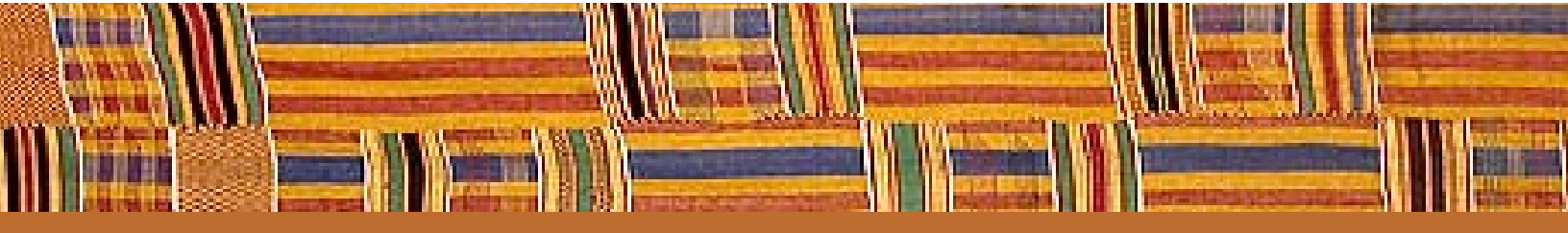
- 
- iv. Catholic Apostolate Center – Inspired by the spirituality of St. Vincent Pallotti, the Center offers many resources for the New Evangelization: <https://www.catholicapostolatecenter.org/>
 - v. ChristLife – Equipping Catholics for the essential work of evangelization so all people may encounter Jesus Christ: <https://christlife.org/>
 - vi. The Evangelical Catholic – Serving parishes, university ministries, and individual leaders to launch evangelization movements: <https://evangelicalcatholic.org/>
 - vii. Magis Center – Contemporary, science-based apologetics to grow your faith: <https://www.magiscenter.com/>
 - viii. Renewal Ministries -- fostering renewal in the Catholic Church through the power of the Holy Spirit for the salvation of souls: <https://www.renewalministries.net/>
 - ix. USCCB New Evangelization Resources – The New Evangelization calls each of us to deepen our faith, believe in the Gospel message and go forth to proclaim the Gospel: <https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/new-evangelization>

b. Effective Parenting for Families:

- i. Positive Parenting: Building Healthy Relationships with Your Kids, From NIH (News In Health) US Department Of Health And Human Services
 - 1. Adventures In Parenting: Learn To Be Effective, Consistent, Active, And Attentive: <https://bit.ly/ParentAdventures>
 - 2. Communicating With Your Child: <https://bit.ly/CommunicatingChild>
 - 3. Essentials For Parenting Toddlers And Preschoolers: <https://bit.ly/ParentEssentials>
 - 4. Family Checkup: Positive Parenting Prevents Drug Abuse: <https://bit.ly/FamilyCheckup>
 - 5. Parent Information: <https://www.cdc.gov/parents/index.html>
 - 6. Parenting Videos: <https://bit.ly/Videos4Parents>
 - 7. Play To Learn: <https://bit.ly/KidsPlay2Learn>
 - 8. Tips For Connecting With Your Kids: <https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2017/09/positive-parenting>
- ii. Other Resources For Black Families:
 - 1. Healthy Black Families, Inc.: <https://healthyblackfam.org/>
 - 2. How To Raise A Child: 7 Tips For Success: <https://bit.ly/BrainParenting>
 - 3. The Importance Of Community In Black Parenting: <https://bit.ly/CommunityParenting>
 - 4. Podcast: Raising Joyful And Resilient Black Children: <https://apple.co/49dohKI>
 - 5. Raising The Next Generation: Black Parents And Caregivers: <https://bit.ly/RaisingNextGen>
 - 6. What Does It Mean To Raise Free Black Children? <https://bit.ly/FreeBlackChildren>
- iii. Current Books On Effective Black Parenting:
 - 1. The Black Parenting Book: Caring for Our Children in The First Five Years: <https://amzn.to/49doxIP>



2. Child Discipline In African American Families: Culturally Responsive: <https://amzn.to/47X4eP0>
 3. Setting Your Child Up For Success: The Perfect Guide For African American Parents: <https://amzn.to/3HG0B56>
 4. Standing Strong: Good Discipline Makes Great Teens by Dr. Ray Guarendi, available on EWTN Religious Catalogue: <https://bit.ly/StandStrongGreatTeens>
 5. The Black Man's Guide To Parenting: 50 Ways To Be An Effective Father: <https://amzn.to/3vXBokf>
- e. **Financial Literacy:** Below are only a few of the organizations that provide free resources for financial literacy education. Your local financial institution may offer education programs.
- i. FDIC (Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation) provides a resource called Money Smart, that can help people of all ages enhance their financial skills and create positive banking relationships: <https://www.fdic.gov/resources/consumers/money-smart/>
 - ii. Udem.com's Personal Finance 101 features numerous personal finance classes. Many of the classes are low-cost, but Personal Finance 101 is free and designed for beginners: <https://www.udemy.com/course/personal-finance-101/>
 - iii. University of Michigan provides an online course titled Finance for Everyone: Smart Tools for Decision-Making. Learn to apply frameworks and smart tools for understanding and making everyday financial decisions: <https://www.edx.org/learn/financial-literacy/the-university-of-michigan-finance-for-everyone-smart-tools-for-decision-making>
- f. **Foundations:** There are several foundations that provide grants for programs that benefit Black Catholics. The following are just a few of the national foundations; there may be others that restrict their grant-making to a state or region.
- i. Black and Indian Mission Office – Grants are given for African American and Native American evangelization outreach and ministry programs: <https://blackandindianmission.org/>
 - ii. Lilly Endowment – In the Open Initiatives category, the Endowment accepts grant applications that support work within one of the Endowment's three main areas of focus: community development, religion and education and youth: <https://lillyendowment.org/for-grantseekers/>
 - iii. National Black Catholic Congress Daniel Rudd Fund – The Daniel Rudd Fund (DRF) provides grants to organizations involved in ministry to Black Catholics. The goal of this grant is to financially assist new and existing programs that promote the Gospel within parishes, schools and communities: <https://nbccongress.org/the-daniel-rudd/>
 - iv. Raskob Foundation for Catholic Activities -- Organizations located within the U.S. and or the U.S. territories may apply if they are tax-exempt 501 (c) (3) with public charity status, and Catholic, listed in the P.J. Kenedy Official Catholic Directory: <https://www.rfca.org/giving>

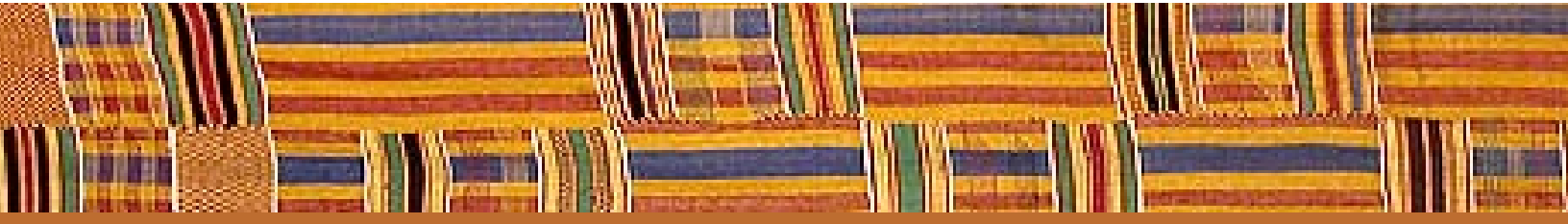
- 
- v. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Subcommittee on Catholic Home Missions – The Subcommittee serves home mission dioceses; those unable to provide their people with the basic pastoral ministries of Word, worship and service without outside help. It may also give grants to other dioceses for particular projects, and to organizations and religious communities engaged in missionary work:
<https://www.usccb.org/committees/catholic-home-missions/grant-guidelines>

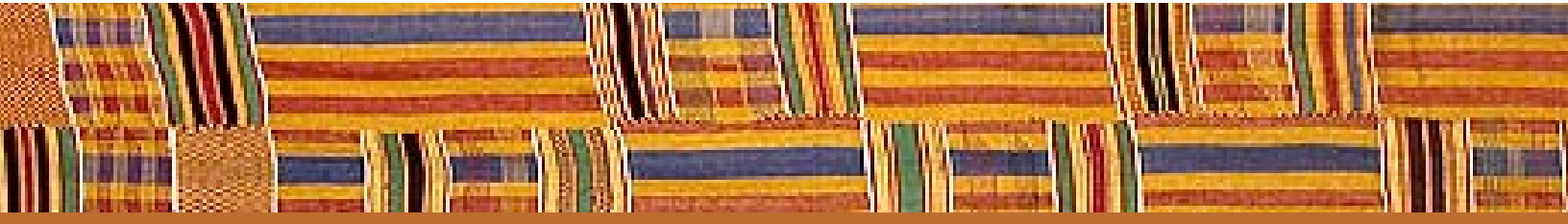
 - g. **Grant Writing:** The ability to write compelling grant proposals is essential for non-profit leaders to ensure the financial sustainability, growth, and impact of their organizations, thereby effectively addressing the needs of their communities and stakeholders. Here are just a few educational programs for aspiring grant writers.
 - i. EventBrite offers webinars on grant writing. To view the many webinars, go to: <https://www.eventbrite.com/d/online/free--events/grant-writing-classes/>, but make sure the “Free” button is selected under price.
 - ii. Grant Writing For Beginners & Newbies – Best practices in grant writing and advice: (<https://www.classcentral.com/classroom/youtube-grant-writing-for-beginners-newbies-61755>).
 - iii. Grant Writing for Nonprofits – This free course is from Class Central Classrooms, and includes 36 sessions on different grant-related topics: (<https://www.classcentral.com/classroom/youtube-grant-writing-for-nonprofits-61756>).

 - h. **Historically Black Colleges and Universities:** Find the full list of HBCUs by clicking this link: <https://www.thehundred-seven.org/hbculist.html>

 - i. **Keep on Teaching:** Written and published by the Archdiocese of Baltimore Office of Black Catholic Ministries, this resource manual, written from an Africentric perspective, offers a unique study of the rituals and sacraments of the Catholic faith. It is designed to assist catechists, parish leaders, evangelization ministers and youth ministers who serve in the Black Catholic Community. All of the booklets from 2006 through 2023 are available at: www.nbccongress.org/resources-opportunities/.

 - j. **Leadership Formation:**
 - i. **The GIVEN Institute**, Catholic Young Women’s Leadership Forum is dedicated to activating the gifts of young adult women for the Church and the world. GIVEN forms women for mission and for life: <https://giveninstitute.com>
 - ii. **Institute for Black Catholic Studies at Xavier University in Louisiana** is a Catholic Theological Institute at Xavier University of Louisiana, which has two program divisions that educate non-ordained laity & clergy persons for Catholic ministry within U.S. Black Catholic communities: <https://www.xula.edu/ibcs>
 - iii. **Loyola Marymount University** African American Studies offers a B.A. or a minor in this field: <https://bellarmine.lmu.edu/afam/>
-

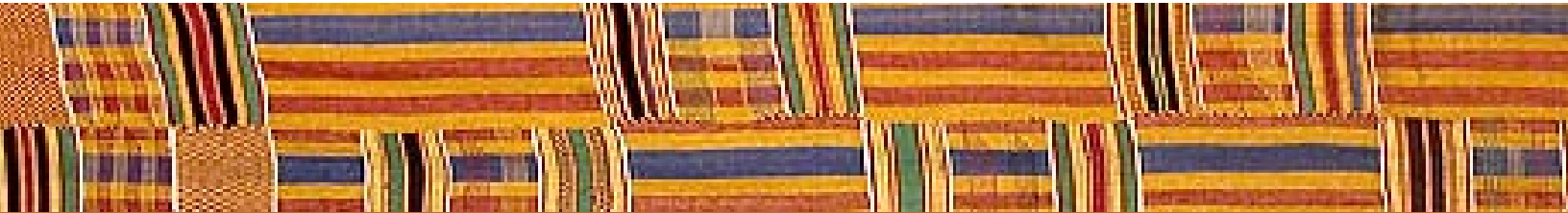
- 
- iv. **The National African American Catholic Youth & Young Adult Ministry Network (NAACYYAMN)** enhances the Professional Development of African American Catholic Youth and Young Adult Ministers, and fosters a support system for African American Youth and Young Adult Ministers and nurtures African American Youth: <https://naacyyamn.org/>
 - v. **The Sankofa Institute for African American Pastoral Leadership** provides opportunities for intellectual, professional, and inspirational development through classes, lectures, symposia, worship, leadership workshops, internships and practical field education, as well as social outreach and cultural celebrations: <https://ost.edu/ost-institutes/sankofa-institute/>
- k. **Men's Ministry, Catholic and Protestant**
- i. **Catholic Men's Leadership Alliance:** <https://www.catholicmenleaders.org/>
 - 1. Leadership Coaching. “[No Man Left Behind](https://bit.ly/NoManLeft)” outlines our field-tested formula to launch and grow local ministry to men: <https://bit.ly/NoManLeft>
 - 2. Catholic Men's Group Programs: <https://www.catholicmenleaders.org/>
 - a. The Rescue Project is an eight-week small group format program that incorporates food, conversation, and prayer: <https://rescueproject.us/>
 - b. Crossing the Goal is a 'plug and play' formatted program that makes it easy to run in your group. The program is free of charge: <https://bit.ly/CrossingGoal>
 - c. Hearts Afire is a three-stage program that leads small groups in preparation for Marian Consecration, for Divine Mercy Sunday, and finally into keeping 'Hearts Afire' through ongoing formation through small groups: <https://bit.ly/HeartsAFire>
 - d. Heroic Men is a 100% free Catholic streaming platform for men who want to discover the truth and goodness of the Catholic faith: <https://heroicmen.com/>
 - ii. **AG Men's Ministries:** <https://men.ag.org/>
 - 1. LAUNCH: Starting a Men's Ministry: PDF guide with nine steps to starting a men's ministry in your local church: <https://men.ag.org/start>
 - 2. LEAD: Building Your Team provides nine critical steps for choosing and developing your men's leaders: <https://men.ag.org/start>
 - iii. **Black Men's Ministry, Catholic and Non-Denominational**
 - 1. National Black Catholic Men's Conference (NBCMC) is an annual gathering of Black Catholic Men sponsored by the Bowman-Francis Ministry: <https://www.bowmanfrancis.org/>
 - 2. National Black Church Initiative: The Black Church Invites All Black Men Back to Church: The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI) is a coalition of churches working to eradicate racial disparities in healthcare, technology, education, housing, and the environment: <https://bit.ly/Men2Church>

- 
3. Heart to Heart Counseling Center offers counseling for men addicted to pornography. Visit the website at: <https://drdougweiss.com/> for counseling options and books on the topic of sexual addiction and intimacy anorexia. Watch Dr. Weiss' instructional videos on his YouTube channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/c/DrDougWeiss>.

I. Mental Health Resources

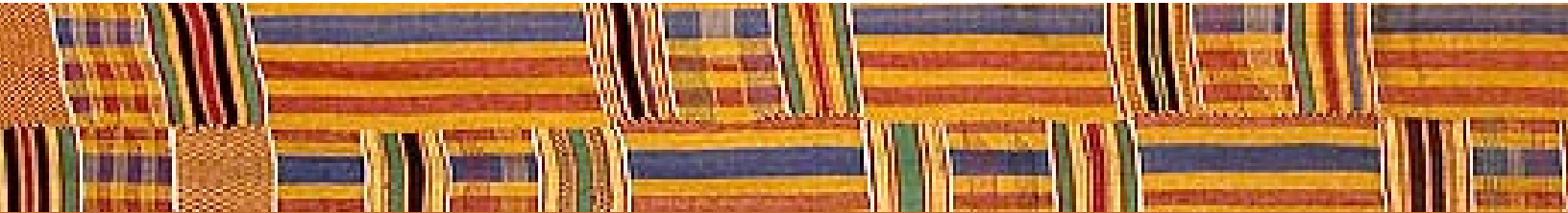
- i. NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) provides information and resources for Black Americans: <https://www.nami.org/Home>
 1. The Effects of Racial Trauma on Mental Health: Deaths Captured on TV and Media: <https://bit.ly/BlkAACulture>
 2. About Mental Illness: Useful information about Mental Illness in the U.S.: <https://www.nami.org/About-Mental-Illness>
 - a. Warning Signs and Symptoms: <https://bit.ly/3HKIPxz>
 - b. Mental Health Conditions: <https://bit.ly/MHConditions>
 - c. Common with Mental Illness: What are other conditions that may be synchronous with mental disorders: <https://bit.ly/MICommonalities>
 - d. Treatments: <https://bit.ly/MITreatments>
 - e. Mental Health by the Numbers: <https://www.nami.org/mhstats>
 - f. Research: <https://www.nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Research>
- ii. MHA (Mental Health America): <https://mhanational.org/>
 - I. Black and African American Communities and Mental Health
 - a. BIPOC Mental Health: <https://www.mhanational.org/bipoc>
 - b. Bipolar Disorder and Black Americans: <https://bit.ly/BlackBipolar>
 - c. Culturally-Based Practices: <https://bit.ly/CulturalPractices>
 - d. Depression in Black Americans: <https://bit.ly/3vVYyaA>
 - e. Policy Issue: Health Care Disparities Among Black, Indigenous, and People of Color: <https://bit.ly/3OpBwiO>
 - f. Racism and Mental Health: <https://bit.ly/RacismMH>
 - g. Racial Trauma: <https://www.mhanational.org/racial-trauma>
- iii. The Association of Catholic Mental Health Ministers: <https://www.catholicmhm.org>
 - I. Other Helpful Catholic Organizations:
 - a. National Catholic Partnership on Disability Council on Mental Illness and Wellness: <https://ncpd.org/disability-ministry/mental-illness>
 - b. Sanctuary Mental Health Ministries: <https://sanctuarymentalhealth.org/catholics/>
 - c. Catholic Institute for Mental Health Ministry: <https://www.sandiego.edu/soles/centers-and-institutes/catholic-institute-mental-health/>

- d. University of Notre Dame Fiat Program on Faith and Mental Health: <https://mcgrath.nd.edu/about/centers-initiatives-and-programs/fiat-program-on-faith-and-mental-health/>
- e. St. Luke's University Health Network Psychiatry & Behavioral Health: <https://www.slnh.org/psychiatry-and-behavioral-health>
- iv. Black Mental Health Alliance: <https://blackmentalhealth.com/>
 - 1. Podcast: Real Talk: Black Minds Matter: <https://bmha.buzzsprout.com/>
 - 2. Connect with a Therapist: <https://bit.ly/48V44c2>
 - 3. 12 Books on Behavioral Health Written by Black People: <https://bit.ly/4bbC1a5>
 - 4. Reading List for Black Men: <https://bit.ly/BookList4Men>
- v. American Addiction Centers offers treatment to men and women addicted to pornography: <https://projectknow.com/porn-addiction/>
- m. **National Black Catholic Congress Pastoral Plans of Action:**
 - i. Congress XIII (2023) PPA: <https://bit.ly/3OpMh4J>
 - ii. Congress XII (2017) PPA: <https://bit.ly/CongressXIIPPA>
 - iii. Congress XI (2012) PPA: <https://bit.ly/CongressXIPPA>
 - iv. Congress X (2007) PPA: <https://bit.ly/CongressXPPA>
 - v. Congress IX (2002) PPA: <https://bit.ly/CongressIXPPA>
 - vi. Congress VIII (1997) Our Mother of Africa Chapel Brochure: <https://bit.ly/OMACHapel>
 - vii. Congress VII (1992) PPA: <https://bit.ly/CongressVIIIPPA>
 - viii. Congress VI (1987) PPA: <https://bit.ly/CongressVIPPA>
- n. **Pro-Life Information & Education:** <https://bit.ly/ProLifeResources>
- o. **Vocations:** Discerning the best path to live out God's call for your life is made a bit easier with the following resources. In addition, you can contact your diocesan vocations office for more information.
 - i. Lay/Secular Orders of Religious Communities: <https://religiouslife.com/resource/third-orders>
 - ii. National Black Catholic Congress (NBCC) has a webpage devoted to vocations of all kinds: <https://www.nbcccongress.org>
 - iii. National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) offers a free online resource titled VISION Vocation Guide: <https://issuu.com/visionvocationguide>
 - iv. USCCB Committee of Clergy, Consecrated Life & Vocations provides resources for men and women who are discerning their call: <https://www.usccb.org/committees/clergy-consecrated-life-vocations/vocations>



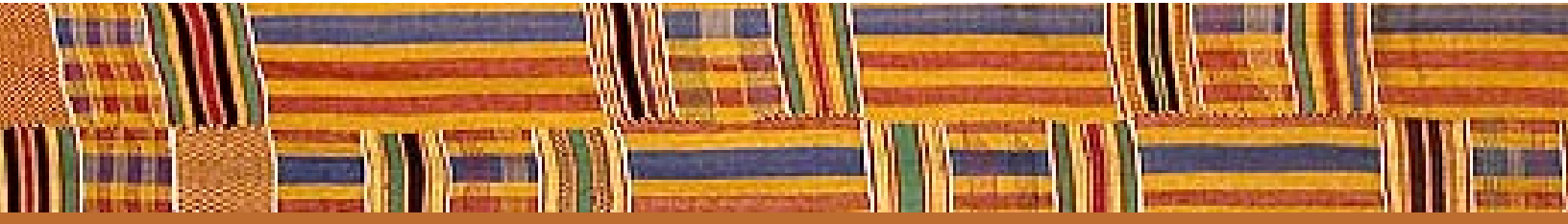
NOTES





NOTES





NOTES



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With our deepest gratitude, we acknowledge the contributions of the following people who worked so diligently to create this concise and well-constructed Pastoral Plan of Action.

Pastoral Plan Committee

Therese Wilson Favors, Chairperson

Howard W. Roberts

Fr. Stephen D. Thorne, Ed.D.

Patricia A. Waddell

Sharon H. Winchester

The National Black Catholic Congress Board of Trustees and Contributing Consultants



Pictured in the back row, left to right: Therese Wilson Favors (Consultant), Dr. Christopher Pichon (Supreme Knight, Knights of Peter Claver), Fr. Gerard Marable (National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus), Dr. Kathleen Dorsey Bellow (Director, Institute for Black Catholic Studies at Xavier University), Fr. Kareem Smith (National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus), Dale Brown (National Association of Black Catholic Administrators), Micaela LeBlanc (Supreme Lady, Knights of Peter Claver Ladies Auxiliary), Valerie Washington (National Black Catholic Congress Executive Director), Grant Jones (Executive Director, Knights of Peter Claver).

Front row, left to right: Bishop Roy E. Campbell, Jr. (National Black Catholic Congress President), Sr. Patricia Ralph (National Black Sisters' Conference), Kimberley Hefner (National Black Catholic Congress Project Coordinator).



**The National
BLACK CATHOLIC
Congress**

320 Cathedral Street, Baltimore, MD 21201
Ph. 410.547.8496 / Web: www.nbcccongress.org