25th Anniversary
“Brothers and Sisters To Us”
Selected Chronology

1639  Death of St. Martin de Porres in Lima, Peru.

1824  Unsuccessful foundation of a community of Black women religious by Charles Nerinckx in Loretto, Kentucky.

1829  Elizabeth Lange, Marie Ballas, Rosine Boegue, and Almeide Duchemin Maxis begin religious life in Baltimore as the Oblate Sisters of Providence. First Black congregation of women religious in the United States.

1839  Condemnation of the slave trade by Pope Gregory XVI in the bull In Supremo Apostolatus.

1842  Henriette Delille and Juliette Gaudin begin the Sisters of the Holy Family in New Orleans, Louisiana.


1824  Death of Pierre Toussaint in New York. Toussaint, a slave in his native Haiti, was brought to the United States and worked as a hairdresser. He was declared “Venerable” by Pope John Paul II, and if canonized will become the first African American saint.


1871  Arrival of Mill Hill Fathers (Josephites) in Baltimore.

1874  Francis Patrick Healy, S.J is named president of Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

1875  The Civil Rights Act concerns itself primarily with the prohibition of racial discrimination in places of public accommodation. In 1883, however, the Supreme Court rules the law unconstitutional. This decision virtually removes the federal government from the civil rights arena, particularly in regard to enforcement of the 14th Amendment.

1886  Ordination of Reverend Augustus Tolton in Rome. Tolton was denied ordination in the Catholic Church in the United States because he was Black.

1886  Daniel Rudd, a former slave, establishes The American Catholic Tribune, a weekly Black Catholic newspaper. The paper is currently being published by the National Black Catholic Congress as a newsletter, The African American Catholic Tribune.
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1889 First Black Catholic lay congress, in Washington, D.C. Other congresses are held in Cincinnati (1890), Philadelphia (1892), Chicago (1893), and Baltimore (1894).


1891 Foundation of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People by Blessed Katherine Drexel.

1891 Death of Reverend Augustus Tolton in Chicago.

1908 Lincoln Vallé opens Catholic mission for the black community in Milwaukee.

1909 The Knights of St. Peter Claver is founded.

1913 Thomas Wyatt Turner organizes a committee on behalf of black Catholic servicemen.

1916 Mother Theodore Williams and Father Ignatius Lissner begin the Handmaids of Mary in Savannah, Georgia.

1920 First seminary for Black candidates for the priesthood is started by the Society of the Divine Word in Greenville, Mississippi, later moved to Bay St. Louis (1923).

1921 Founding of the Ladies Auxiliary of the Knights of St. Peter Claver.

1924 Founding of the Federated Colored Catholics of the United States.

1931 Xavier University in New Orleans, Louisiana, is established by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament and becomes the first Black Catholic university in the United States.

1934 Organization of the first Catholic Interracial Council in New York City, by John LaFarge, SJ.

1964 Dr. Lena Edwards Madison (1901-1986), a social activist and Catholic obstetrician/gynecologist, receives the Medal of Freedom for her work and dedication to impoverished communities, especially among migrant workers.

1966 Episcopal ordination of Harold Perry, SVD, as the auxiliary bishop of New Orleans. Second Black bishop in the history of the United States.

1968 Formation of the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus in Detroit, results in the subsequent development of the National Black Sisters’ Conference (1968) and the National Black Catholic Seminarians Association.
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1971  The National Office of Black Catholics is founded in Washington, D.C.

1978  Death of Llewellyn Scott, a Catholic layman, who founded the Blessed Martin de Porres Hospice for poor Black men.


1989  James Goode, O.F.M., designates the first Sunday in February (Black History Month) as a National Day of Prayer for the African American Family.

1997  Dedication of Our Mother of Africa Chapel in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC.

1990  The National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus designates November as Black Catholic History Month.

1998  Bishop Wilton D. Gregory, of the Diocese of Belleville, Illinois, is elected Vice President of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

2000  Mother Josephine Bakhita becomes the first African woman to be canonized by the Roman Catholic Church in the new millennium.


2001  First Gathering of Black Catholic Women (Charlotte, NC) organized by the National Black Sisters Conference.

2002  Ninth Black Catholic Congress held in Chicago, under the theme “Leadership on One Accord.”

2003  The formation of the National Black Catechetical Network.

2004  Second Gathering of Black Catholic Women (Houston, TX).

2004  25th Anniversary of the U.S. Bishops’ Pastoral Letter on Racism – “Brothers and Sisters to Us.”