

# HABARI GANI

Diocese of Beaumont - Office of African American Ministry

## From the Directors' Desk

*Habari Gani* is a Swahili term meaning “*what’s the word?*” The Diocese of Beaumont Office of African American Ministry will publish a quarterly newsletter that will bring the news—“the word”—to and from the African American Community. There is so much going on in our parishes that we need to share with each other.

*What’s the Word?* Is your parish having a bazaar, zydeco, revival, workshop, retreat? Please let us help you tell the other parishes what is going on in our church communities. We also want to share information—workshops, books, visual resources, speaker forums—from our national and international African American Catholic community that we hope will be of interest to you. African and African American saints, religious and lay people will be highlighted in each newsletter.

Is there something you would like to know more about? Are there untold stories in our individual churches that need to be shared? For instance, do you know which parish has a retreat center with a prayer labyrinth?

The newsletter will highlight special projects such as our current focus from the National Black Catholic Congress—*Journey Through the Sacraments*. In coming months, we will ask pastors from consortium parishes to write a column for us. We will invite our youth and young adults to tell us *the word* from their perspective. Our Spiritual Moderator, Fr. Henry Davis, SSJ, and our Commission Chairperson, James Carter, will also tell us “*what’s the word*” from their point of view. We are excited about this new venture and hope you will be enriched and blessed by what you read here. We hope this newsletter will inform and inspire each of you. As always, I wish you

*Blessings, peace and strength for your journey.*

## Looking Forward

**APRIL 2009**  
Volume 1 Issue 1  
=====  
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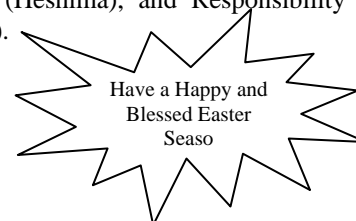
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The Archbishop James P. Lyke Conference will be held on June 17-21, 2009, in New Orleans, Louisiana. Registration fee per person is \$150.00. The theme is “In Christ, All Is New” and the conference event is for pastors, pastoral teams, liturgical ministers, youth and lay leaders who work with liturgical music and pastoral ministry in the African American Catholic community. The focus is to enhance worship through enculturation and education in an environment that is richly African American and authentically Catholic. For detailed registration information, please go to [www.lykeconference.com](http://www.lykeconference.com). The conference will be preceded by the Fr. Clarence Rivers Music Institute and the Liturgical Dance Institute.

The National Black Catholic Men’s Conference, Men To Men: Part II is to be held in Birmingham, Alabama, October 2-4, 2009. Registration fee: \$125.00 for adults and \$75.00 for youth. For more information call: 317-259-0144 or visit their website at: [www.bowmanfranciscanministry.com](http://www.bowmanfranciscanministry.com). The theme is: “WAJIBU: Real (Halisi), Respect (Heshima), and Responsibility (Wajibu).





**St. Benedict the Moor**  
**Feast Day:** April 4<sup>th</sup>  
**Born:** 1526 in Messina, Sicily, Italy  
**Died:** April 4, 1589 of natural causes  
**Canonized:** 1807 by Pope Pius VIII  
**Patron:** African Americans

*A QUICK REVIEW*

**January 11, 2009**

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Observance was held at St. Anthony Cathedral Basilica. The Mass of Unity and Peace in Diversity began at 12:00 noon. Homilist for the event was Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, the Preacher of the Papal Household from the Vatican.

**March 3, 2009**

St. Katharine Drexel Feast Day Celebration was held at Blessed Sacrament Church, Beaumont. Mass, scheduled for 6:00 p.m. with Bishop Curtis J. Guillory as the homilist for the celebration, was followed by a banquet. Keynote speaker for the evening was Sister Gilda Bell, S.B.S., of New Orleans, La.

**ABOUT SAINT BENEDICT THE MOORE**

St. Benedict was born to African slaves who were brought from Africa to Messina, Sicily. There they converted to Christianity. Benedict grew up on the farm working as a slave like his parents, along with his siblings. His master freed him from slavery at the age of 18. His name “the Moor” was the interpretation of the Italian phrase, ‘il Moro,’ meaning ‘the Black’ for the color of his skin.

Benedict worked as a day laborer earning meager wages, but was always willing to share with those less fortunate. In time, he became acquainted with some hermits who were followers of the rule of St. Francis. Benedict joined the hermits near Palermo when he was about 21 years old. He began his service at the friary as a cook, but was soon elected guardian, then novice master, even though he had never been ordained. Benedict was known to have a very deep, intuitive understanding of theology and the Holy Scriptures and was often sought out for counseling. People from all walks of life sought out Benedict for healing, advice and guidance.

Benedict, although he was an illiterate, was elected as the leader of the order following the death of Joseph Lanza, a former landowner who had sold all his possessions in order to lead the life of poverty and prayer in the order.

Benedict died at the age of 65; some accounts say it was the very day and hour he had predicted. In 1807, Pope Pius VIII canonized Benedict for his holiness and used that time to speak out against the evils of slavery.

**Our Black / Catholic Calendar**

**April**

- 4...St. Benedict the Moor
- 6...James A. Healy, 1<sup>st</sup> Black Catholic Bishop in U.S., b. 1830
- 12...Easter Sunday
- 16...Black Catholic Clergy Caucus founded 1968
- 19...Divine Mercy Sunday
- 22...Joseph D. Bowers, SVD, ordained Bishop, Bay St. Louis MS, 1953
- 24...Ordination of Rev. Augustus Tolton, 1<sup>st</sup> Black Catholic Priest, Rome 1886

**May**

- 3...World Day of Prayer for Vocations
- 5...Eugene A. Morino, SSJ, 1<sup>st</sup> Black Archbishop in U.S., Atlanta GA, 1988; Terry Steib, SVD, installed Bishop, Memphis TN 1993
- 6...St. Martin de Porres canonized a Saint, Rome, 1962
- 10...Mother’s Day
- 17...Edward K. Braxton ordained Bishop of St. Louis MO, 1995
- 21...Ascension Day; National Black Catholic Congress VI, Washington DC, 1987
- 31...Pentecost Sunday

(continued on Page 4)

NBCCX / EVANGELIZATION

The 10<sup>th</sup> Annual National Black Catholic Congress which was held in July 2007 chose as its theme “*Christ is with us: Celebrating the Seven Sacraments*” and charged attendees with the task of giving witness to their faith through evangelization efforts in the individual parishes when returning home. The African American Ministry Office established an Evangelization Team and has set the goal of providing catechesis in three stages: *Sacraments of Service* (Marriage and Holy Orders), *Sacraments of Initiation* (Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation), and *Sacraments of Healing* (Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick).

Newspaper articles, bulletin inserts, workshops and numerous other means of providing information will be utilized to help enhance current education to persons in the pews with regard to the Seven Sacraments of the Catholic Church. Everyone is encouraged to actively participate in this endeavor.

## African American Advisory Commission

The Office of African American Ministry proudly accepts and encourages the assistance of the following persons who have been appointed by Bishop Curtis J. Guillory, S.V.D., to serve on the Diocesan African American Commission. These commissioners act as a liaison between their individual parishes and the Office, and as representatives of the African American Ministry Office in diocesan settings.

### Officers

#### Ex Officio

Most Reverend Curtis J. Guillory, SVD, DD  
Bishop, Diocese

#### Spiritual Moderator

Rev. Henry J. Davis, SSJ  
Blessed Sacrament /  
Our Mother of Mercy Catholic Church  
Beaumont

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St. James Catholic Church  
Port Arthur

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Our Mother of Mercy Catholic Church  
Beaumont

Mr. Joseph Vallery  
St. Pius X Catholic Church  
Beaumont

# INSIGHTS

## *THE FIVE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF PRAYER*

By Dr. Jeff Mirus  
From an article in the Catholic Culture Commentary.

The primary purpose of prayer is to increase our relationship with God. How should we approach prayer? Let us explore the first principles that must underlie all prayer. When we fail to begin with the right principles, either we will not make the progress we should, or we may not really get started at all.

### *Principle 1: There is No Such Thing as Coincidence*

The entire universe is governed by Divine Providence; everything depends on God. God permits our prayers and actions to play a role in the fulfillment of His Plan. What we do and how we pray actually make a difference in how God's plan unfolds. Prayers works by invoking Divine power. This is a powerful inducement to pray.

### *Principle 2: You are You and God is God*

Prayer itself cannot happen until we grasp the fundamental

difference between the two parties: God and us. Confusion on this basic point causes all kinds of difficulties with prayer. We cannot puff ourselves up, let alone pride interfere with the deep sense of dependence and gratitude that we ought to have with respect to God. We shouldn't approach God in negotiation mode; we shouldn't make heartfelt promises while under duress; instead, we must rely on His mercy and love, which shows far greater recognition of Who God is.

### *Principle 3: Feelings Don't Matter*

Once we get started on the right track in prayer, our feelings will almost always become an impediment to our progress. God grants us consolations when we first commit ourselves to prayer. We feel a peace or sweetness or a delight of some kind. It is all well and good until God sees that we are ready to move on from loving the consolations to actually loving him. When left on our own we will be plagued by distractions, feel bored or "dry," or experience prayer and meditation as hard work. In

prayer, we must learn to "Be still..." (Ps.46:10) and "Taste and see..." (Ps.34:8) so that we can grow into God's invitation to rest in His presence and go deeper into prayer.

### *Principle 4: Prayer Is Not A Political Tool*

We should pray that people will do politics for God's glory and according to His will. Our political prayers should not be parleyed into a form of political pressure or social enhancement designed in part to be a public demonstration to apply pressure as its ultimate purpose. We must examine our motives. Our prayer is to seek God's help in all situations. When prayer becomes political in nature, its spiritual power is lost.

### *Principle 5: Group Prayer Is Never Enough*

We will never develop anything beyond a superficial relationship with God if we participate only in group prayer. These prayer offerings should lead us to seek time alone with God in prayer. We should explore—in our own special way—a quiet, personal intimacy with God. Without diminishing the importance of community

prayer in general, the key to union with God is in the determination to respond to His love by spreading personal, intimate time alone with Him. We should be drawn to spiritual reading, silent meditation on Scripture, time before the Blessed Sacrament, interior conversation with God, listening to Him in our hearts, and resting in his tender embrace, growing in awareness of His Presence. In time, this intimacy will spill over into all of our activities and everything we do.

### *Prayer and Perfection*

Principles help get us off on the right foot. Progress in prayer suffers dramatically when any of these principles is neglected. The point of prayer is union with God. This union requires the gradual purging away of anything in us that is not worthy of God.

Perfect prayer is perfect conformity with God's will. There is no progress in holiness without prayer; to pray is itself a prompting of grace. ~~~~~

## Our Black / Catholic Calendar

(continued from Page 2)

### June

- 1...James Healy, 1<sup>st</sup> U. S. Catholic Black Bishop ordained Portland ME, 1875
- 7...Trinity Sunday
- 14...Body & Blood of Christ
- 15...Josephite Pastoral Center founded in Washington DC, 1968
- 19...Sacred Heart
- 20...Immaculate Heart of Mary
- 21...Father's Day
- 22...Edward K. Braxton installed Bishop of Belleville IL, 2005
- 24...James P. Lyke installed Archbishop, Atlanta GA, 1991
- 25...Joseph A. Francis, SVD, ordained Bishop, Newark NJ, 1976
- 29...Saints Peter and Paul feast day; Joseph N. Perry ordained Bishop, Chicago IL, 1998
- 30...Pierre Toussaint, saintly Black layman d. 1853

SUGGESTED READING	RECOMMENDED INTERNET WEBSITES
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Left to Tell Discovering God Amidst the Rawandan Holocaust</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ilibagiza, Immaculee Hay House, Inc. ISBN: 13:978-1-4019-0896</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Listening'n': A Multicultural Reading of the Psalms</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Reid, Stephen Breck Abingdon, 1997 ISBN: 0-6870-1194-9</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Blackening of the Bible: The Aims of African American Biblical Scholarship</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Brown, Michael Joseph Trinity International Press, 2004 ISBN: 1-56338-363-2</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>From Slave to Priest: A Biography Of the Rev. Augustine Tolton (1854-1897) The First Black Priest of the United States</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Hemesath, Caroline Sr. Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 2006 ISBN: 978-1-58617-097-4</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Black and Catholic: The Challenge and Gift of Black Folk</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Phelps, Jamie T., O.P., Editor Marquette University Press ISBN: 0-87462-629-5 (pbk)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>DIOCESE OF BEAUMONT</b> <a href="http://www.dioceseofbmt.org">www.dioceseofbmt.org</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>NATIONAL BLACK CATHOLIC CONGRESS</b> <a href="http://www.nbccongress.org">www.nbccongress.org</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Working in collaboration with national Roman Catholic organizations and is committed to establishing an agenda for the evangelization of American Americans.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>BLACK CATHOLIC STUDIES</b> <a href="http://www.xual.edu/IBCS.html">www.xual.edu/IBCS.html</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;">This is a direct link to Xavier University.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>IN A WORD</b> <a href="http://www.inaword.com">www.inaword.com</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;">This is the monthly publication for and about African American Catholics.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE</b> <a href="http://www.catholicnews.com">www.catholicnews.com</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Reports the news which affects Catholics in their everyday lives.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>NATIONAL BLACK CATHOLIC APOSTOLATE FOR LIFE</b> <a href="http://www.blackcatholicsforlife.org">www.blackcatholicsforlife.org</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;">No matter what...No matter when...Black Catholics respect life!</p>

## WHO IS HENRIETTE DELILLE: CANDIDATE FOR SAINTHOOD?

Henriette Delille, founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family, a religious community of freed women of color in antebellum New Orleans, was the great, great granddaughter of a slave who came from West Africa. She was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1812 to Jean Baptiste Delille-Sarpy, an aristocrat, and Pouponne Dias, a quadroon. Her immediate family consisted of one sister and two brothers, and a third brother who died in infancy.

Henriette was trained from an early age, like most young free women of color during her time, to be conversant in French literature, to have a refined taste in music and to be able to dance gracefully. Henriette's mother taught her nursing skills and how to prepare medicines from herbs.

From a very young girl, she was very devout and involved in catechizing; she served as godmother to many slave children and was a witness to numerous marriages.

In 1824, Henriette pursued a course different from the one expected of her. During a ball, she was introduced to a French nun named Sister St. Marthe Fontier. This was the first member of a religious community that Henriette had met. She was impressed by Sister St. Marthe's dedication to God and her vows and acts of charity. Sister St. Marthe had purchased land with the assistance of the free people of color of New Orleans and opened a Catholic school for young girls which became the nucleus for missionary activities among Negroes, bound and free. During the night Sister St. Marthe taught classes in morals and faith to adults, and during the day, young girls were given religious instruction. She also trained young colored girls to become teachers. As a result, Henriette

Began to teach at the Catholic school when she was fourteen years old. Henriette became consumed by her work.

In addition to teaching, she visited the sick and the elderly and helped to feed the poor of the city. Prayer was also a necessity in her life. Often she went to the Ursuline Convent's chapel to offer daily devotions.

When Henriette was declared to be of legal age, she sold all her property and began to found a community of Negro nuns with the assistance of a French woman, Marie Jeanne Aliquot. On November 21, 1836, Aliquot and eight other colored women became Sisters of the Presentation. They cared for the sick and poor and taught the freedmen.

In 1837, Father Etienne Rousselon came to New Orleans from France to take charge of the chapel next to the school founded by Sister St. Marthe. Father Rousselon obtained permission for Henriette Delille to found a religious community of Negro nuns.

In 1842 she established the Sisters of the Holy Family with the assistance of her lifelong friends, Juliette Gaudin and Josephine Charles, continuing to minister in serving the poor. In the same year, Henriette and her companions raised money for a new Catholic church.

Henriette Delille was called "Servant of God" and her personal prayer was "I believe in God. I hope in God. I love God. I want to live and die for God."

Henriette Delille died in New Orleans in 1862 at the age of 50.

Her legacy through the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family is the maintenance of their original ministries of educating youth and caring for the aged, the poor, and the most abject of society.

The Sisters have missions in Louisiana, Texas, California, Washington DC, Belize, Central America, and Benin City, Nigeria, West Africa.

The Canonization Process for Henriette Delille was initiated by Archbishop Francis B. Schulte in 1988 and was reviewed by a special commission in Rome; the Vatican gave permission to officially open the process.

The first step, an historical documentation of her life, was completed with the publication of her biography written by Rev. Cyprian Davis, OSB, acclaimed author and authority on Black Catholics.

Promotion of devotion to Henriette Delille is a significant part of the process and this has been done from the beginning and is ongoing. Everyone is asked to join in promoting her Cause.

Two miracles are needed; one miracle for Henriette to be declared blessed and a second miracle for her to be declared a saint. One miracle has already been tried.

Some publications regarding Henriette Delille include: *Henriette Delille: Servant of Slaves—Witness to the Poor* by Fr. C. Davis, OSB; *Henriette Delille "Servant of Slaves"* by V. Gould & C. Nolan; and *No Cross, No Crown: Black Nuns in Nineteenth Century New Orleans* by Sr. Bernard Deggs, SSF.

For more information, contact: Henriette Delille Commission Office, Sisters of the Holy Family, 6901 Chef Menteur Boulevard, New Orleans, Louisiana 70126-5990; phone no. 504-241-9774; fax no. 504-241-9774; and by e-mail address, delillecomoff@yahoo.com.~~~~~

## Our Catholic Church

### Things a Good Catholic Knows

This information is for Catholic only. It must not be divulged to non-Catholics; the less they know about our rituals and code words, the better off they are.

**AMEN:** The only part of a prayer that everyone knows.

**BULLETIN:** Your receipt for attending Mass.

**CHOIR:** A group of people whose singing allows the rest of the Parish to lip-sync.

**HOLY WATER:** A liquid whose chemical formula is H<sub>2</sub>OLY.

**HYMN:** A Song of praise usually sung in a key three octaves higher than that of the congregation's range.

**RECESSIONAL HYMN:** The last song at Mass often sung a little more quietly, since most of the people have already left.

**INCENSE:** Holy Smoke!

**JESUITS:** An order of priests known for their ability to find colleges with good basketball teams.

**JONAH:** The original 'Jaws' story.

**JUSTICE:** When kids have kids of their own.

**KYRIE ELEISON:** The only Greek words that most Catholics can recognize besides gyros and baklava.  
(For you non-Catholics, it means 'Lord, have mercy.')

**MAGI:** The most famous trio to attend a baby shower.

**MANGER:** Where Mary gave birth to Jesus because Joseph wasn't covered by an HMO.  
(The Bible's way of showing us that holiday travel has always been rough.)

**PEW:** A medieval torture device still found in Catholic churches.

**PROCESSION:** The ceremonial formation at the beginning of Mass consisting of altar servers, the celebrant, and late parishioners looking for seats.

**RECESSIONAL:** The ceremonial procession at the conclusion of Mass led by parishioners trying to beat the crowd to the parking lot.

**RELICS:** People who have been going to Mass for so long, they actually know when to sit, kneel, and stand.

**TEN COMMANDMENTS:** The most important Top Ten List not given by David Letterman.

**USHERS:** The only people in the parish who don't know the seating capacity of a pew.

### Little known facts about the Catholic Church in Las Vegas:

There are more churches in Las Vegas than casinos. During Sunday services at the offertory, some worshippers contribute casino chips as opposed to cash. Some are sharing their winnings – some are hoping to win. Since they get chips from so many different casinos, and they are worth money, the Catholic churches are required to send all the chips into the diocese for sorting. Once sorted

into the respective casino chips, one junior priest takes the chips and makes the rounds to the casinos turning chips into cash. And he, or course, is known as The Chip Monk.

## Black Catholic Spirituality

From The National Black Catholic Congress  
[www.nbccongress.org](http://www.nbccongress.org)

“New Life in Christ”  
A Reflection on the Easter Sacraments by Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers, M.T.S.

“Christ emptied himself and took the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men. ...it was thus that he humbled himself, obediently accepting even death, death on a cross! Because of this, God highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name above every other name, so that at Jesus’ name, every knee must bend in the heavens, on the earth, and under the earth, and every tongue proclaim to the glory of God the Father: Jesus Christ Is Lord!”<sup>i</sup>

During the Easter season, the Church recognizes her own death and resurrection: we die to sin and death, and rise triumphantly with Christ into our Heavenly Father’s loving arms: into a relationship of boundless love and everlasting life where sin and death no longer have meaning.<sup>ii</sup> this foundational truth of our faith is the fabric that binds the entire universe together, for it is God’s love that gives life, meaning, and purpose to all things. Being made in His image and likeness, we receive the grace to share in God’s life-giving love that flows freely from His divine heart. This treasure of God’s merciful love that leads to eternal life cannot be attained on our own; only when we are crucified with Christ, only when our sins and sufferings are united with his, only when we die to our old selves and are buried with him can we hope to share in the infinite joy of his resurrection.<sup>iii</sup>

The reception of catechumens at Easter into the fullness of the faith reminds us of the gift given by God to those who are baptized, a gift that unfolds as a lifelong challenge to make the flame of God’s love burn brightly in our hearts and illumine our souls; to challenge ourselves every day to live out our baptismal call to holiness by making Jesus Christ the single most important priority in our lives.<sup>iv</sup> “Thus, the shift from Good Friday to Easter must be two things at once: joy at the most wonderful gift of God’s grace, and determination to keep the promises made at our baptism.”<sup>v</sup> this is why Holy Mother Church, in her limitless wisdom, decrees that on Easter Day we renew our baptismal promises as a reminder of our commitment to be living witnesses to and perfect examples of the goodness, truth, and beauty of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Easter also points us to the sacrament of Confirmation, a sacrament that is an integral part of the initiation into the Christian faith community and not merely a “rite of passage,” or a re-baptism, or a mature decision to be Catholic. Instead, we become more like Christ and are open to a deeper presence and fullness of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the personal expression of God’s love and teaches us to live in His name: to become holy. Holiness is “that sanctity which is to do God’s holy will, the more we implore the assistance and grace of the Holy Spirit, the more we grow in holiness. The Spirit that animates the Easter Mystery helps us grow in love, opening our hearts more deeply to respond to His call to be faithful and faith-filled soldiers of Jesus Christ. Being sealed with the gift of the Spirit reminds us all that we belong to Christ and are living temples of the Word.

The Resurrection Gift of the Lord’s Body and Blood opens our hearts, making us more aware of Jesus’ Real Presence in our lives and the lives of every human person.<sup>vii</sup> In becoming one flesh with the Risen Lord we have the courage to say “Yes” to God’s invitation to new life in him and, with great joy and firm hearts, respond out of a faith, a hope, and a life-giving love that conquers sin and fear, that conquers the darkness of death, and that gives us the courage to say, “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.”

In the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist, we share in God’s life in a deeply personal and intimate way. There is no greater way to remain in His love than to unite our bodies with His so that we may have life and our joy may be complete. Joining ourselves to the Resurrected Christ strengthens and deepens our faith, teaching us to have complete trust and confidence in God’s holy will. In giving his life for His Bride, the Church, Christ took upon himself the spiritual sacrifices of each one of us who offer ourselves in union with the sacrifice of Christ, whose “gift of love and obedience to the point of giving his life ... first and foremost a gift to the Father: ‘a sacrifice that the Father accepted, giving in return for this total self-giving by His Son ... immortal life in the resurrection.’”<sup>viii</sup>

## ABOUT US



### Office of African American Ministry - Diocese of Beaumont

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**We're on the Web!**  
[www.dioceseofbmt.org](http://www.dioceseofbmt.org)

**The Office of African American Ministry is designed to serve as consultant and resource to diocesan offices, parishes, schools and individuals throughout the diocese. In collaboration with clergy, the ministry promotes programs that support the spiritual needs of the African American Catholic community and that of the larger Catholic community of the Diocese.**

Director: Ms. Linda Duhon-LaCour  
Asst. Director: Ms. Tommie Marshall  
Secretary: Ms. Sandra Hall

THE OFFICE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MINISTRY  
PRESENTS THE **HABARI GANI NEWSLETTER** AS  
A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION.

PLEASE INFORM US OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN  
YOUR PARISH THAT YOU WISH TO PUBLISH.  
*THE NEXT ISSUE IS SCHEDULED FOR JULY 2009.*

## DID YOU KNOW?

- The Knights of St. Peter Claver (KPC), Inc., as part of the Black Catholic heritage, commemorate their 100<sup>th</sup> year of existence this year.
- The year 2009 also marks the milestone in our African American history for the establishment of the prestigious organization, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).
- Another incredible advancement in our current history is the election of our nation's first African American President, Barack Obama.
- We also celebrate this year the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the historic pastoral letter from our Black bishops, *"What We Have Seen and Heard."* Obtain a copy today and read it (or re-read it for a second time).
- The Pauline Year is rapidly approaching closure. Pope Benedict XVI proclaimed June 29, 2008 through June 29, 2009 the year of St. Paul. In doing so, he encourages the whole Catholic world to focus on St. Paul, especially as a model of evangelization. Whether as an entire parish or as an inspired individual, we can all imitate St. Paul by spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ each and every day, especially during this holy time of the year, the Easter Season!

These events are significant to our Catholic communities and our country; let us rejoice in them all.

### Black Catholic Spirituality (continued from page 8)

What is the Lord saying to us this Easter? He is telling us that we no longer have to fear, for there is nothing we can every do, there is no sin too great, there is no hurt too deep that cannot be forgiven by the power of the Resurrection! He is saying to us: "I am Christ. Come all you nations, receive forgiveness for the sins that defile you. I am your forgiveness. I am the Passover that brings salvation. I am the lamb that was sacrificed for you. I am your ransom, your life, your resurrection, your light; I am your salvation and your king. I will bring you to the heights of heaven. With my own right hand, I will raise you up,"<sup>ix</sup> and I will draw you into my heart where you will live in the presence of God forever.

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

I. Philippians 2:6-11  
II. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Light of the Word: Brief Reflections on the Sunday Readings*, 69.  
III. Ibid.  
IV. Ibid.

- V. Ibid., 70.
- VI. Lumen Gentium, n.41.
- VII. Pope John Paul II, Ecclesia de Eucharistia, 13.
- VIII. Ibid.
- IX. From an Easter homily by Melito of Sardis, Liturgy of the Hours, Volume II, p. 555.

## Repentance: The Way Back Home

“I firmly resolve with the help of thy grace to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.”

Over the years, most of us have repeated those words many times in the confessional or during our night prayers. We asked God’s forgiveness of our faults and failures and promised not to succumb to those same temptations again. Although we knew we were forgiven and our sins were washed away, we realized the reconciliation with God and the Christian community was dependent on true sorrow for transgressions and a firm commitment to do better in the future.

Simply put, we are called to repent. That means we must have a change of heart and a strong determination to turn from our evil ways. Addressing the matter of penance, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, “Among the penitent’s acts, contrition occupies the first place. Contrition is sorrow of the soul and detestation for the sin committed, together with the resolution not to sin again.” (VII, 1451)

In the beginning of St. Mark’s Gospel, John the Baptist issues a call to repentance because the kingdom of God is at hand. He tells his listeners to confess their sins and to do good works such as alms giving to the poor and to be faithful to one’s Christian duty to love one another. In Matthew 4:17 and Mark 1:15, Jesus also calls upon his followers to repent and believe the Good News. The same echoes in our lives today as we are challenged to let go of our sinful ways and live the Gospel message.

If we believe that conversion is a life-long process, we must accept repentance as an integral part of that conversion. Because we are weak and vulnerable to the constant evil that surrounds us, we realize that we are completely dependent on God’s mercy and forgiveness day after day. At times our sinfulness is akin to an illness. We can take comfort in the knowledge that Jesus, the great physician, is always ready and willing to heal our wounds (Luke 5:21-32).

The practice of our Catholic faith demands that we be vigilant at all times, constantly seeking to avoid the pitfalls of sin and distractions. The holy season of Lent again presents an opportunity to take stock of our lives, make a firm commitment to confront our weaknesses, and come back to the Father with humility and contrition.

In the old version of the Way of the Cross, we ended each station by saying, “I love Thee, Jesus, my love, above all things. I repent of having offended Thee. Never permit to separate myself from Thee again.” Like lost sheep, we often stray from the fold, but the road back is always open.

