



Parish Connection

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A quarterly newsletter for sharing information concerning Black Catholic Ministry

Mary, the Immaculate Conception — Patroness of the United States

Charles O. Prejean, Sr.
Director, OBCM

The May edition of the *Parish Connection* invites the readers to focus attention on the Holy Family and the continued importance of our intercessional devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph. Our God lifted each to serve in important roles in His Divine Plan of Incarnation, roles that continue to serve us as followers of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Church history is replete with examples of the benefits of their patronage to us in all walks of life.

The Catholic Church of the United States has had a strong devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, even from the early years of nationhood. In fact, history tells us that Bishop John Carroll, the first Roman Catholic Bishop of the United States, placed the young nation under the protection of Mary. This spiritual bond with the Blessed Virgin persisted in a number of

ways over the years and was made even more concretely formal by the Vatican when Pope Pius IX proclaimed Mary as the “Patroness of the United States,” under the title of her Immaculate Conception.

The National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception

During an August 15, 1913 audience with Pope Pius X, Bishop Shanahan of Baltimore received the Holy Father’s enthusiastic support for the building of a national shrine in Washington, DC to honor Mary. The Board of Trustees of Catholic University donated the land for its construction and on November 20, 1959 the Great Upper Church of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception was dedicated. On his October 7, 1979 visit to the United States, Pope John Paul, II had this to say about the National shrine and our devotion to Mary:

“...This Shrine speaks to us with the voice of all America, with the voice of all the sons and daughters of America who came here from various countries of the world . . . Who came together around

the heart of a Mother they all had in common.”

The Shrine, a Multi-Cultural Devotional Expression
The Shrine of the Immaculate Conception is the

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National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. Constructed in Washington, DC in Honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Shrine was Dedicated in November of 1959.

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largest Catholic Church in the Americas and is numbered among the largest churches in the world. It measures a total of 459 feet long and covers an area of 77,500 square feet. The Great Upper Church is 399 feet long and can accommodate more than six thousand worshippers. The Crypt Church is 200 feet long, 160 feet wide, and can comfortably seat more than 400 persons. In a sense, the Crypt Church was a work in progress over time. Over the years sixty chapels and oratories have been established in the Crypt Church, representing the many cultural forms of devotional expression to Mary. One of these Chapels is dedicated to Our Mother of Africa. Truly, the Crypt Church of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception can be seen to represent, in the full splendor of its multi-cultural richness, the universal wholeness of the Catholic Church. Through these various cultural prisms we have come to know and love Mary as the Mother of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and as our Mother and Intercessor before her Divine Son.

At the Annunciation, Mary accepted the angel's invitation to become the Mother of God. Because she cooperated in giving the Redeemer to the world, the Church has taught that Mary

represented the redeemed human race at the moment she said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to Thy word" (Luke 1:38)

(www.nationalshrine.com/nationalshrine/tour_c31.htm.)



Statue of "Our Mother of Africa and Devine Son" located in the "Our Mother of Africa Chapel" at the Basillica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate

Because of the Incarnation, Christ's Passion and Death, and her assumption into heaven, Mary participates in the distribution of God's grace by her maternal intercession before her Divine Son. And it is through the life of Grace, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, that we are united in the Mystical Body of Christ and receive the spiritual resources we need to work out our eternal salvation. (Ibid) Mary's mediating role in the sacred drama is uniquely embodied in the African American experience and eloquently expressed below in the sculptured

program of Our Mother of Africa Chapel. (Ibid)

Our Mother of Africa Chapel

As a result of the efforts of the African American bishops, in conjunction with the National Black Catholic Congress and with the support of a number of Black Catholics, clergy and lay, Our Mother of Africa Chapel was dedicated in 1997. Over four thousand of the faithful were in attendance for this occasion. The Chapel expresses the devotion of African American Catholics to the Blessed Virgin and our abiding faith in her intercession on our behalf before her Divine Son. The edifice to Our Mother of Africa represents our hope and vision of the faith, which we received from, for some our foreparents, and for others from the untiring efforts of dedicated men and women. Our long-standing devotion to Mary and the very essence of our faith are captured and distilled in stone and bronze, in art and poetry, in sacred images and symbols. (Ibid)

A Sacred Conversation

The statue of Our Mother of Africa holding the Christ Child faces a bas-relief in the nave, as it chronicles the African American odyssey and draws us to the Crucified Christ in the sanctuary. These three sculptured images, rendered with idealized African American features, are meant to

encourage a *sacred conversation*, one that allows the spectator to become a participant with Our Mother of Africa, with her Crucified Son, and with their African American children in the drama of the Incarnation. The *sacred*



St. Matthew, the Human/Angel

conversation begins with our captivity in Africa and proceeds to depict the inhuman cruelties endured during the Middle Passage and during the periods of enslavement, segregation, and continued oppression in the United States. (The tortured, yet hopeful expressions of African Americans are depicted in the bas-relief on the wall of



St. Mark, the Lion

the nave and on the abstraction in bronze relief of the Henrietta Marie, a slave ship). (Ibid)

The Four Evangelists

With the addition of the four sculptures of the four Evangelists, the Chapel of Our Mother of Africa continued to evolve. These sculptures of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are depicted with distinct



Narrative Relief on the Wall of the Nave of the Mother of Africa Chapel celebrates the African American experience



St. Luke, the Ox

African features. Along with the statue of Our Mother of Africa, the-bas relief panel of our ancestors, and statue of the crucified Christ, the four Evangelists add their voices of welcome to join the *sacred conversation*. Also, each of the Evangelists is represented symbolically by one of the creatures described in the Book of Ezekiel 1: 4-5 and in the Book of Revelation 4:7. Christian art and iconography

have come to use these creatures as images found in Ethiopian Christian Art. (Ibid)

St. Matthew's Gospel begins by telling the human ancestry of Jesus. (Matthew 1:1)

St. Mark's Gospel begins in the wilderness. (Mark 1:3)

St. Luke's Gospel begins in the temple, a place of sacrifice and tells of the birth of the Christ in a place where farm animals lived. (Luke 2:16)

St. John's Gospel begins far above all. (John 1:1)

The Unifying Role of Form, Tone and Texture

Through the sensitive handling of form, tone, and texture, the architects, Leo Daly Associates, have united architectural style and sculptural elements of the Chapel to create

a happy ambience for the *sacred conversation*. The spectator is invited to participate in the *sacred conversation* through an introductory panel with the words from Isaiah 49:15 “...can a mother forget her infant, Be without tenderness for a child of her womb?...”



St. John, the Eagle

On the opposite wall, beneath the narrative the divinely inspired words of Isaiah continue, as they give hope to all of us who suffer

under the yoke of oppression.
 “...The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light:

Upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shown...

For the yoke that burdened them...

And the rod of their taskmaster you have smashed.

For a child is born to us, a son is given us:

Upon His shoulder dominion rests.”

– Isaiah 9:1,3,5

(For additional information on the national Shrine of the Immaculate Conception please go to the following websites:www.nationalshrine.com and www.nbccongress.org).

The Holy Family – Cornerstone of Black Spirituality

Charles O. Prejean, Sr.
 Director, OBCM



Salvation Purifies and Sanctifies the Family — That Sanctuary of Love and Cradle of Life

As Catholic families, we have turned to the Holy family over the course of time because, as Pope Paul VI says, “We believe that Mary and Joseph are the summit from which all holiness spreads over the earth...The Savior began the work of Salvation by this virginal and holy union, wherein is manifested his all-powerful will to purify and sanctify the family—that sanctuary of love and cradle of life.”

As mothers and fathers, as members of the consecrated life and as single persons, we continue to turn to the Holy Family for intercessional nourishment.

All the articles in this edition are meant

to remind us as Catholics of African ancestry, of The Blessed Virgin’s faithfulness, as well as that of St. Joseph, to us on the uniquely difficult journey of life we have and are experiencing. We also use this opportunity to give thanks to the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph for the intercessional benefits that they have gained for all God’s people.

As we prepare this edition of the Parish Connection, our thoughts and prayers are with all our sisters and brothers of God’s human family, especially those who are in harms way. We lift up in prayers all mothers, asking God to grant them his special blessings throughout their lives and especially on the occasion of Mother’s Day. We pray similarly for all fathers during the month of June, but particularly on the occasion of Father’s Day.

Special Thanks !

The Office for Black Catholic Ministry would like to express its appreciation to Fr. Peter Hogan SSJ, archivist for the Josephite Society, for the materials on St. Joseph and to Mr. Gregory Tabb, of the National Congress Staff, for the information on Our Mother of Africa Chapel.

These materials were very helpful in preparing the articles for the May edition of the Parish Connection.

Without your assistance, we would not have been able to complete this edition. God Bless!

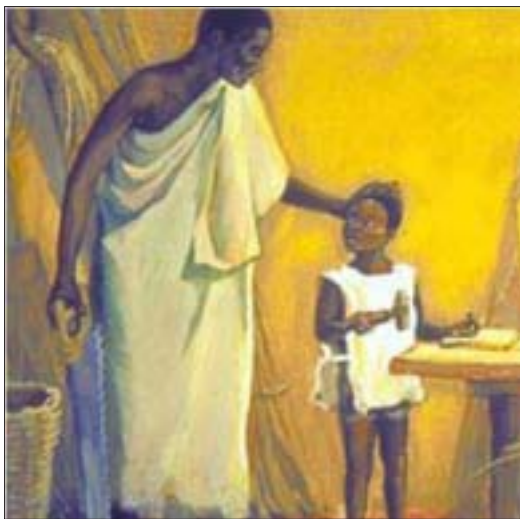
St. Joseph – Patron Saint of the Universal Church

Husband, Father, Faithful and Obedient Servant of God

Charles O. Prejean, Sr., Director, OBCM

While surveying the literature for this article, I was initially struck by what seemed to be a defensive tone taken by some of the writers, as they attempted to portray the life of

come to know the person to whom he had entrusted His Son and His Son's Mother by the way he responded to the Divine Charge given to him.



The work experience enabling the sanctification of daily life

St. Joseph. Though the writer acknowledged that St. Joseph was the most prominent saint in the Catholic liturgy after the Blessed Virgin, they were quick to say that there was not a single word in the Scriptures quoting him. Upon reading further, however, this notion was quickly dispelled. It soon became clear to me that there was a central point that each of the authors were attempting to convey. The point was that God chose St. Joseph because of what He wanted him to do and not what He wanted him to say. He wanted us to know Joseph from his silence. He wanted us to see what it means to have faith in God and to see obedience to God as it is practiced by a faith filled person. God wanted us to

Understanding God's Call to St. Joseph from Scripture

It is in reading and understanding Holy Scripture, particularly their elucidation by the Fathers of the Church over the centuries, that we come to know Joseph. Most of what is to be known of Joseph can be found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Combined, these Gospels tell of the Incarnation and God's revelation to Mary of her role in this Divine Drama and her unconditional acceptance of God's Call. Similarly they tell of God's revelations to Joseph in this same regard, "Joseph, Son of David do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit: she will bear a son, and you shall call his name

Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins' (Mt 1:20-21). The Holy Father Pope Paul II tells us, "In these words we find the core of biblical truth about Saint Joseph; they refer to the moment in his life to which the Fathers of the Church make special reference." (*Redemptoris Custos-Guardian of the Redeemer*, August 15, 1989, p. 1.)

The Fathers of the Church Speak of Joseph: Selected Excerpts

Pope Pius IX, writing at a very difficult time in the Church's history, wishing to place her under the powerful patronage of the Holy Patriarch Joseph, declared him Patron of the Catholic Church. (*Quemadmodum Deus*, December 8, 1870, p. 283). We are told that this was no idle gesture on the part of Pius IX. His declaration was very much in keeping with Church teaching and belief in the sublime dignity that God had granted to his most faithful servant, Joseph. Calling to mind this belief, handed down by Church Fathers over the centuries, Pope Pius IX can summarily state, "...the Church, after the Blessed Virgin, his spouse, has always showered him with praise, having recourse to him amid tribulations." (*Ibid*, p. 282f)

What are the reasons for such great confidence? Pope Leo XIII goes on to explain: "...The reasons why St. Joseph must be considered the special patron of the Church, and the Church in turn draws exceeding hope from his care and patronage, chiefly arise from his having been the husband of Mary and the presumed father of Jesus...., Joseph was in his day the lawful and natural

guardian, head and defender of the Holy Family... It is thus fitting and most worthy of Joseph's dignity that, in the same way that he once kept unceasing holy watch over the family of Nazareth, so now he does protect and defend with his heavenly patronage the Church of Christ." (*Quamquam Pluries*, August 15, 1889, pp. 177-179).

In more recent times, Pope John Paul II, affirming the positions of Pope Pius IX and Pope Leo XIII, writes "his (St. Joseph's) preferential status determined by God and the logic of our belief in turning to him to intervene in our behalf in times of trouble, reminds us that the patronage of St. Joseph must be invoked as ever necessary for the Church." He further adds seemingly to remind us not to limit our intercessional prayers to St. Joseph, only during times of peril, "... This is so not only as a defense against all dangers, but also and indeed primarily as an impetus for her renewed commitment to evangelization in the world and to re-evangelization in those lands and nations" (*Redemptoris Custos-Guardian and Redeemer*, August 15, 1989, p. 13) "where ... religion and the Christian Life were formerly flourishing and put to a hard test." (*Christifideles Laici*, December 30, 1988, p. 456)

St. Joseph's Silence In Marriage

And what did Joseph say in response to the Angel of the Lord? He said nothing, as we are told in Matthew 1:24, "When Joseph woke up from sleep, he did as the Angel of the Lord commanded him and took Mary as his wife." He took her in all the mystery of her motherhood. He took her together with the Son who had come into the

world by the power of the Holy Spirit. In this way he showed a readiness of will like Mary's in regard to what God asked of him through the angel. (*Redemptoris Custos-Guardian of the Redeemer, 15 August 1989, p. 4*) Similarly, each time God called, Joseph responded affirmatively with his actions, i.e., the flight into Egypt to secure the safety of Jesus and Mary, and the return to Nazareth.

Surely Joseph response to God's Call to him leaves no doubt about his faith. Though he may not have understood fully God's Plan, the essence of the Incarnation, understanding seemed less urgent than his need to follow the dictates of his faith and trust in God. One sees from Church history the very nature of his faith as he practiced his responsibilities as husband to Mary and as foster father to Jesus. In understanding these we can further conclude that Joseph was the quintessential role model for all of us with these similar responsibilities. Pope John Paul II reflecting on Joseph's response to God's Call to him has this to say, "...Beside trusting in Joseph's sure protection, the Church also trusts in his noble example, which transcends all individual states of life and serves as a model for the entire Christian community, whatever the condition and duties of each of its members may be." (*Ibid. p. 13*)

Not knowing what to do when he learned that Mary was with child, and unwilling to put her to shame and potentially death by stoning, Joseph considered sending Mary away quietly. However, when God sent His angel to him to tell him, "...do not be afraid to take Mary your wife." (Matthew 1:20-21), Joseph's affirmative action became, as St. August-

ine and St. Thomas explains, a part of "an indivisible union of souls," a "union of hearts," "with consent." (*St. Augustine, Contra Faustum, XXII, and St. Thomas, Summa Theol.*). Also by his consent in marriage, Joseph became a participant in a "...sacrament of the New Covenant", Pope Paul VI says. (Paul VI, Discourse to the "Equipes Notre-Dame" Movement, May 4, 1970). He discharges his spousal responsibilities to Mary in this new union according to the Grand Design of Our Heavenly Father. Our faith informs us that the essence and role of the family are in the final analysis specified by love. The family has the mission to guard, reveal and communicate love, becoming a living reflection of a real sharing in God's love for humanity and the love of Christ the Lord for His Church, His Bride. (*Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio, November 22, 1981, 17: AAS 74 (1982), p. 100*) Joseph's great love for Mary and Jesus, reflected in his faithful discharge of his family responsibilities, contributes to the essential reality of the Holy family as the prototype and example for all Christian families.

Joseph's Silence in Fatherhood

Saint Joseph was called by God to serve the person and mission of Jesus directly through the exercise of his fatherhood. It is precisely in this way that, as the Church Liturgy teaches, he "cooperated in the fullness of time in the great mystery of salvation" (*St. John Chrysostom, In Matthew Hom. V, 3: PG 57, 57f*). Joseph's fatherhood is expressed concretely in his having made his life a service, a sacrifice to the mystery of the Incarnation and to the redemptive mission

connected with it. This he does by using his legal authority which was his over the Holy Family in order to make a total gift of self, of his life and work and by turning his human vocation to domestic love into a superhuman oblation of self, an oblation of his heart and all his abilities into love placed at the service of the Messiah. (*Paul VI Discourse, March 19, 1966: Insegnamenti, IV, p. 10*). Joseph's response to God, as spouse and father, and to his union of marriage was a total commitment of love.

Work and the Sanctification of Daily Life

One cannot but marvel over the great faith that this ordinary man had. He was just a carpenter, a humble person who allowed God's will to be done through him. Imagine Jesus working along side Joseph from the time of the incident in the temple and the years in Nazareth before His Public life began. What meaning can be drawn from the work in which father and son were engaged? We are told that Jesus' work at the side of the carpenter contributed to the image of the Family of Nazareth as the model of the human family from which definition and meaning is drawn. Human work and especially manual labor receive special prominence in the Gospel. Along with the humanity of the Son of God, work too has been taken up in the mystery of the Incarnation, and therefore has been re-deemed in a special way. By providing the workplace venue in which he and Jesus engaged in work, Joseph brought human work closer to the mystery of the Redemption. Work was the daily expression of love in the life of the Holy Family of Nazareth, and so should it be

for the Christian families today.

In the mystery of the Incarnation, the work experience in which Jesus and Joseph were engaged is meant to convey the very sanctification of daily life. It is a sanctification that each person must acquire according to his or her own state, and one which can be promoted according to a model accessible to all people. St. Joseph is the model of those humble ones that Christianity raises up to great destinies ... he is the proof that in order to be a good and genuine follower of Christ, there is no need of great things-it is enough to have the common, simple and human virtues, but they need to be true and authentic. (*Pope Paul VI, Discourse, March 19, 1969: Insegnamenti, VII, p. 1268*).

Joseph and His Profound Interior Life

The total sacrifice, whereby Joseph surrendered his whole existence to the demands of the Messiah's coming into his home, becomes understandable only in the light of his profound interior life. (*Ibid*) This submission to God, this readiness of will to dedicate oneself to all that serves Him, are really nothing less than that exercise of devotion which constitutes one expression of the virtue of religion. (*St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theol. II-II, q. 82, a 3, ad 2*)

St. Joseph, by his action, shows us how to respond to God's Will as husband, father, and as family. He shows us how to find dignity in work and how to find God in the pursuits of daily living and thereby live saintly lives. The silence of St. Joseph found its eloquence in his actions, in saying yes to God's Call and God's Will. ☩ ☩ ☩

The Black Madonna

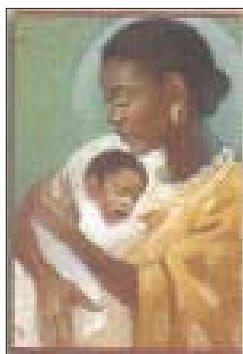
and the Catholic Church

John C. Phillips
Student Publisher,
Parish Connection

The most sacred icons of the Catholic Church are the Black Madonna and Christ child, which are found in



Europe's most venerated shrines and cathedrals. Each year, hundreds of thousands of European pilgrims ritually humble themselves before the image of Black Mary and her child Jesus at Black Madonna sites throughout France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Belgium, Portugal and other Catholic countries. Many Black Madonna statues have the black paint literally kissed off of their hands and feet. In Poland, the Church encourages believers to pray to the Black



Madonna of Czestochowka every morning before rising. It is reported that Pope John Paul follows this ritual. *Time Magazine* (June 11, 1979) reported on Pope Paul II's visit to Czestochowka's holiest

shrine, which prominently displays "The Lady" known for centuries as the Black Madonna. At Our Lady of Koden (Poland), there are statues of white saints carrying pictures of Black Madonnas. Pilgrims throughout the ages have visited Black Madonna



sites and left inspired, confident, relieved, or healed of their afflictions. Today, there are over 300 documented Black Madonna sites in France alone. Sometimes they are hidden away in vaults, while the public is shown Madonnas with European features.



In the hard-to-find classic, *Anacalypsis*, historian Godfrey Higgins writes, "... in all the Romish countries of Europe, in France, Italy, Germany, etc., the God Christ, as well as his mother, are described in their old pictures and statues to be black. The infant God, in the arms of his black mother; his eyes and drapery white, is himself perfectly black. If the

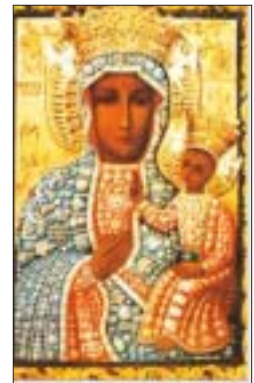
readers doubt my word, he may go to the cathedral at Moulins — to the famous chapel of the Virgin at Loretto . . . the whiteness of the eyes and teeth, and the studied redness of the lips, are very observable . . ." There is scarcely an old church in Italy where some remains of the worship of the Black Virgin and Black Child are not to be met with. Very often the black figures have given way to white ones, and in these cases the black ones, as being



held sacred, were put into retired places in the churches, but were not destroyed . . .

The Black Madonnas originally all had Africoid features before most of them were destroyed by iconoclasts. When they were replaced, the artists retained the dark skin color but, not being familiar with real Africans, gave European features to the paintings. In cases where originals have survived, you may witness Africoid features on Mary and her child Jesus, such as the Black Madonna of Nuria, Spain — called "the Queen

of the Pyrenees." Russia's remarkable legacy of Black Madonnas and other Christian icons of dark skin are evi-

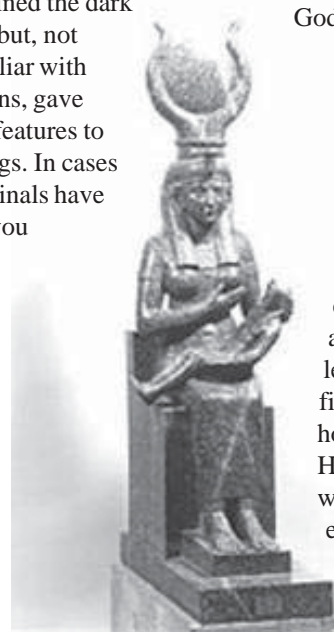


Queen of the Pyrenees

denced in the book, *Russian Icons* by Vladimir Ivanov, including the feature story of the Spring 1994 issue of *Russian Life* magazine, graced with a Black Madonna on its cover.

Actually the worship of the virgin, Black "Mother of God" with her God-begotten child, far predates Christianity and prevailed throughout the ancient world.

Historians recognize that the statue of the Egyptian Goddess Isis with her child Horus in her arms was the first Madonna and Child. They were renamed Mary and Jesus when Europe was forcibly Christianized. The worship of Isis and Horus was especially popular in ancient Rome. Roman legions carried this figure of Black Isis holding the Black infant Horus all over Europe where shrines were established to her. So holy and venerate were these shrines that when Christianity invaded Europe,



Goddess Ad (Isis) suckling her Holy Child Heru (Horus)

these figures of the Black Isis holding the Black Horus were not destroyed, but turned into figures of the Black Madonna and Child. Today these are still among the holiest shrines in



Catholic Europe. Titles such as *Our Lady*, *The Great Mother*, are the same titles attributed to Isis. The word “Madonna” itself is from *mater domina*, a title used for Isis. The month of May, which was dedicated to the Virgin Mothers, is also the month of Mary, the Christian Virgin.

Scholarly Disagreement

Over the Black Madonna

Incredulously, there are some contemporary white authors who seem not to link or acknowledge the Black Madonna’s color with her African origin, although their European ancestors did without hesitation. There are those who flatly deny any racial connection. Instead they offer various reasons and



Black Madonna Icon of 19th Century Russia

sophisticated explanations (i.e., the “dark” phase of the

moon, fertility of the earth, etc.) which serve as excuses for the fact that “The Lady” is portrayed Black.

This is evident in a number of books by white authors, which discuss the Black Madonna. These authors appear to have become so enmeshed in the webs of false history woven by their predecessors that they seem to be blind to evidence of African historical presence. Some white authors of today, who are unaware of the Black Madonna’s African origin, should read the works of a few other scholars who preceded them, such as Gerald Massey, T.W. Doane, Godfrey Higgins, and Kersey Graves. These writers knew and wrote the truth. This is amazing given the exceedingly racist times in which they lived. Yet today, many white establishments

deny the African genesis of religion.



In *Bible Myths*, T.W. Doane devotes a chapter to The Worship of the Virgin Mother, where he candidly states, “*The whole secret of the fact of these early representations of the Virgin Mary and Jesus — so-called-being-black, crowned, and covered with jewels, is that they are of pre-Christian origin; they are Isis and Horus... Baptized anew.*”



Coordinator for NBCC Initiatives

Black Catholic Leadership in the Twenty-First Century

This is an appeal to the delegates to Congress IX, asking everyone to give serious thought to the initiatives that could be employed to proceed with the work of Congress IX.

The Office for Black Catholic Ministry needs help to proceed with this very important work and is asking for one or several of the delegates to serve as its volunteer-coordinator(s). The responsibilities of the Volunteer-Coordinator(s) would include the following:

- ✓ Assist the OBCM in developing an Overall Plan for the implementation of Congress IX Action Plan.
- ✓ Convene meetings with the

parish delegates to Congress IX, as a group and individually.

- ✓ Assist the parish delegates in developing parish plans for the implementation of the Congress IX Action Plan.
- ✓ Identify the support needs that the parish delegates may have for the development and implementation of parish plans.
- ✓ Assist the parish delegates to secure the support services needed to implement the parish plans, from the OBCM, or from other sources.
- ✓ Implement all aspects of the Overall Plan.

Ordination into the Diaconate

The Office for Black Catholic Ministry extends its congratulations to Rev. Mr. Chester Giffin, Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church, and to Rev. Mr. Bill McKenzie, Christ Our Hope Catholic Church on the occasion of their ordination to the Diaconate.



Rev. Mr. Chester Griffin, Member of Our Lady of Lourdes



Rev. Mr. Bill McKenzie, Member of Christ Our Hope

We pray for God’s blessing on the ministries of all the deacons of the 2003 Class. We also pray that their work in the Vineyard of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will serve well God the Father’s Plan of Creation.

There is Something About Mary



Will Thomas, Morehouse College
Student, Assist. Editor, *Parish Connection*

From time to time, God picks certain people to play a special role in his plan of peace love and justice. Those who were divinely chosen include Abraham, Moses, David, and Christ, who had by far the most special role of all. However, there was nothing special about Abraham or Moses or David. They were special people and had a special role only because of the grace God gave them. The same is true for Mary. Everything that was special about her and her place in God's plan came from God's grace. After all, isn't this what we are saying when we pray the words of the Angel Gabriel in Luke's gospel, "**Hail Mary, full of grace.**" Everything about Mary, everything that makes her and her place in God's plan different from ours, is only because of God's grace to her. Mary is entirely a product of God's tender, loving grace.

Local Mary Celebration

At the turn of the century, His Holiness the Pope requested that in the Jubilee Year, Catholic Women should gather for a day to honor the Blessed Virgin Mary. Here in the Archdiocese of Atlanta, a local Black Catholic Church has been serious with the Popes

request. Agnes Driskell, a long time member of Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church brought the idea to the parish from the National Council of Catholic Women. According to the request of His Holiness, the event needed to be for all women and not for any specific women's group with these criteria. However, last year the committee decided that any event this important and this good should include men as well as the youth, but only three men were in attendance, and no youth.

This year was the most inclusive year to date registering 115 parishioners, including 14 men, with the Haitian community being well represented. Father Kevin Peek celebrated Mass, with discussions groups following after. The guest speaker for the event was Sister Nora Ryan, O.P. who spoke on the subject of Mary as an example for all for everyday life, challenging all to ask "What Would Mary Do."

Mary's Genealogy

The Bible does not mention Mary's early life, although few other details of her life are mentioned or implied in the Bible. The scriptures do not present an exact genealogy of Mary, but we can make a few speculative comments about her family background. Tradition has it that she was the daughter of St. Joachim and St. Anne, announced miraculously to them. She was presented and dedicated at the Temple as a virgin and she was assumed directly into heaven, a doctrine that did not appear until the 5th cent. In 1950, Pope Pius XII's bill *Munificentissimus Deus* made

Mary's bodily assumption into heaven an article of faith. The Gospel of Luke implies as a possibility that Mary is a descendant of David. That is only a possibility and we should remember that the other New Testament's sources are silent about the issue of Mary's descent from David. However, we can say that through Mary's marriage to Joseph, she entered his family and legally became a part of the House of David.

The Faith of Mary and Joseph

The gospel of Luke portrays Mary and Joseph as faithful Jews, having Jesus circumcised and presented to God in accord with Jewish law. The scriptures say, "His parents used to go up every year to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover." Once during this very popular pilgrimage, Mary and Joseph lost track of their twelve-year-old son. Eventually, they found him in the temple amazing Jewish teachers with his insight.

Mary and Protestants

God's grace to Mary is something with which Protestants can agree, even though they do not recognize just how gracious God was toward Mary. Even Protestants recognize that Mary had a special place in God's plan. If for nothing else, Mary's special place was assured by the fact that she, out of all the women in world history, was chosen to be the mother of the Son of God. So Protestants are very willing to say that Mary had a unique role in God's plan of the ages. Unfortunately, they do not see all that this role entailed and all of the implications of Mary

being Christ's mother, and the nature of her intercessory role in our lives.

Mary's Role in Christianity

Mary's role as the second Eve also explains the doctrine of her perpetual virginity. The first Adam and the first Eve did not remain virgins but populated the earth, yet the second Adam and the second Eve remained virgins all their lives in order to consecrate themselves to serving God full-time. Thus Jesus never married or had children. He did this so he could consecrate himself to serving God full-time.

In the same way, Mary was consecrated to the full-time service of God. The documents of the early Church, such as the Protoevangelium of James record that she was one of the women who, like in Luke, the prophetess Anna lived celibate lives in the Temple in Jerusalem, serving as full-time prayer warriors. This would be the Old Testament equivalent of contemplative nuns.

Mary: The Model Christian

Not only is Mary a true model for women, she is also a model for Christians in general. Despite the cultural gap of twenty centuries, the faith and active love for God and neighbor, which she showed, are ideals for which every member of the Church should strive. The Church frequently presents her as a type or model for Christian faith and discipleship. Mary offers a natural model for wives and mothers, though there were aspects of her situation unique to Mary because of her God-given role in the history of salvation. Indeed, even the self-giving love, which has such a maternal character in her, is certainly an ideal for all people to imitate her in their own manner.



Oh Mary, Don't You Weep

Fr. Edward B. Branch, D. Min.
Catholic Chaplain, Lyke House at AUC



Fr. Edward B. Branch, D. Min

*O, Mary don't you weep
don't you moan*

*Pharaoh's army got
drowned*

O, Mary don't you weep

Catholics in the Bible Belt are often maligned for having erroneously developed a "cult" of Mary. Developments of Marian devotion in some European settings have left us well open to this criticism. Misunderstanding the cultures of Central and South America, not to mention Mexico, Spain and Portugal has contributed as well to the critique. Sage and knowledgeable Roman Catholics who want to enter into a full conscious and active participation in their faith tradition are led to methodically return to the sources and resources for our apostolic belief. There we realize that there is more to this Marian devotion than simply a matter of private practice. What we have in Mariology is indeed a theology, a consistent revelation of how God is communicating with the human family. One

thing is true of divine communication; it is almost always characterized by paradox. The mystery of Mary is no exception. In a religion whose anthropology, sociology, and iconography is patriarchal (male), the central paradigm for discipleship is a woman. Mary stands at the center of an old and new covenant parade of women who exemplify God's use of the powerless to manifest The Omnipotent's inscrutable and incontestable power. The first source for this revelation has to be the scriptures.

Mary's Directional Leadership for Women in the Economy of the Divine Plan

To reflect on Mary as woman in the scriptures is instructive. Mary, the mother of Jesus, does not come to us as a stand alone in the texts. Mary is at the center of an entourage of women and prophetic people in Judeo-Christian (and even Islamic) memory who manifest not only how God acts in finite time, but also divine priorities in the economy of delivering us all into the divine vision called the Kingdom of God begun on earth. She is at the center of a tradition of responding to Divine imperatives. The mystery of Mary draws our attention to what is common among those wonderful women of the scriptures: Ruth, Esther, Myriam, Judith, Elizabeth, Mary the sister of Lazareth, Martha, Mary Magdalene, Priscilla and Aquilla. Post Testament women join their chorus: Elizabeth Lange, Henriette Delisle, Katherine Drexel,

Dorothy Day, Dr. Lena Edwards, and, Mother Theresa. They manifest in their lives, the embrace of powerlessness to allow the power of God to show forth. When the powerless let themselves be used by God, the divine power breaks forth.

From the Powerlessness of Mary the Power of God Shows Forth

In some sense there is no more powerless and pitiful figure in the scriptures than this Mary, the mother of Jesus, who finds herself pregnant, though betrothed, in her little Jewish community. Joseph, her husband to be, holds all the cards in that culture. He could have sent this unwed mother to the street and exposed her to ridicule and even death by stoning. But he is a "just man." He decides to "put her away quietly." Mary discovers, like any Christian will, that when you say yes to God, the trouble is just beginning.

God's Presence, Our Faithful and Constant Companion

She also discovers that God does not leave you alone. He sends angels to whisper in the ears of Joseph. He sends faithful people like Simeon and Anna to let you know that you are not alone in trusting God. God even from time to time gives you situational power to let you know that folks on his side always win. Water becoming wine is no surprise to people used to trusting God. The forgiveness of sin through human instruments is a divine habit recognized by believers like Mary. This pattern of trust of God by the powerless that the divine power might be seen doesn't end with the sacred texts.

The Divine Method in the Employ of the Human Estate

The divine method is not limited to the sacred texts for manifestation. There is a wonderful edited text that ought to be on every Black Christian woman's shelf. Men ought to buy it too. In *A Troubling in My Soul*, Emilie M. Townes assembles a cloud of witnesses from modern times who give testimony to the Marian revelation without much mentioning her name. Even the titles of the contributions are compelling and instructive, illustrative of the point:

"Using Power from the Periphery"
by Rosita Matthews;

"Wading through Many Sorrows"
by M. Shawn Copeland;

"The Sin of Servanthood and the Deliverance of Discipleship"
by Jacquelyn Grant

"The Loves and Troubles of African-American Women's Bodies"
by Cheryl Twonsend Gilkes

Combined, the essays of *A Troubling in My Soul* is a contemporary work that suggest to us what the Mother of God might have written were she living in the twenty-first century. These women are not just speaking to women. They like Mary are speaking for all people of good will. They like Mary give voice to the divine paradox in our time. In her powerlessness, woman becomes for those who seek power and control, the symbol of where real power lies.

Mary, help of the hopeless, continue to show us the power of God!

Deliver us from our weeping ways!



How to Pray the Rosary

The Rosary is a devotion to the Incarnation of Our Lord and to His Blessed Mother. The complete rosary is composed of twenty decades, each decade consisting of the Our Father, ten Hail Marys, and the Glory Be to the Father, and each being recited in honor of some mystery in the life of Our Lord and of His Blessed Mother. During each decade we should call to mind the mystery that it is intended to honor, and pray that we may learn to practice the virtue specially taught us by that mystery.

Steps to Saying the Rosary:

1. Make the Sign of the Cross; say the Apostles Creed.
2. Say the Our Father.
3. Say three Hail Marys.
4. Say the Glory Be.
5. Say the Fatima Prayer.
6. Announce the 1st Mystery, then say the Our Father.
7. Say ten Hail Marys, while meditating on the Mystery.
8. Say the Glory Be, then, say the Fatima Prayer.
9. Announce the 2nd Mystery; then say the Our Father. Repeat 6 and 7 and continue with 3rd, 4th and 5th Mysteries in the same manner.
10. After the last Mystery Say the Hail Holy Queen and the Let Us Pray.

The Sign of the Cross:

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

The Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God, the Father, Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified; died, and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day He arose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

The Our Father

The Hail Mary

Glory Be to the Father

Fatima Prayer:

O my Jesus, forgive our sins; save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those who are in most need of Thy mercy. Amen.

THE MYSTERIES

The Five Joyful Mysteries

(Mondays & Saturdays; Sundays of Advent and after Epiphany until Lent):

- ◆ The Annunciation. *The Angel Gabriel appears to Mary, announcing She is to be the Mother of God.*
- ◆ The Visitation. *Elizabeth greets Mary: "Blessed art Thou among women and blessed is the fruit of Thy womb!"*
- ◆ The Nativity. *The Virgin Mary gives birth to the Redeemer of the World.*
- ◆ The Presentation. *The Blessed Mother presents*

the Child Jesus in the Temple.

- ◆ The Finding in the Temple. *The Blessed Mother finds Jesus in the Temple.*

The Five Sorrowful Mysteries

(Tuesdays & Fridays; Sundays in Lent):

- ◆ The Agony in the Garden. *At Gethsemane Jesus prays as He contemplates the sins of the World.*
- ◆ The Scourging at the Pillar. *Jesus is cruelly scourged until His mortified body could bear no more.*
- ◆ The Crowning with Thorns. *A crown of thorns is placed on the head of Jesus.*
- ◆ The Carrying of the Cross. *Jesus carries the heavy cross upon His shoulders to Calvary.*
- ◆ The Crucifixion. *Jesus is nailed to the Cross and dies after three hours of Agony.*

The Five Glorious Mysteries

(Wednesdays & Sundays after Easter until Advent):

- ◆ The Resurrection. *Jesus rises glorious and immortal, three days after His death.*
- ◆ The Ascension. *Jesus ascends into Heaven forty days after His Resurrection.*
- ◆ The Coming of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles. *The Holy Spirit descends upon Mary and the Apostles.*
- ◆ The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin. *The Blessed Mother is united with her Divine Son in heaven.*

- ◆ The Coronation of the Blessed Virgin. *Mary is gloriously crowned Queen of Heaven and earth*

The Five Luminous Mysteries

(Suggested by Pope John Paul II)
(Thursdays):

- ◆ The Baptism of Christ in the Jordan River.
- ◆ Christ's Self-Manifestation at the Wedding Feast at Cana.
- ◆ Christ's Proclamation of the Kingdom of God with His Call to Conversion
- ◆ Christ's Transfiguration.
- ◆ Christ's Institution of the Eucharist.

The Hail, Holy Queen:

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! Our life, our sweetness, and our hope! To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley, of tears. Turn, then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us; and after this our exile show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus; O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary. *V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God. R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.*

Let Us Pray:

O God, whose only begotten Son, by His life, death, and resurrection has purchased for us the rewards of eternal life, grant, we beseech Thee, that meditating upon these mysteries in the most Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we may imitate what they contain, and obtain what they promise: through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.



Parish Calendar Announcements



The Atlanta
Archdiocesan
Office for
Black
Catholic
Ministry –
National and
Regional

May 11 – World Day of Prayer for Vocations. The Catholic Church dedicates the Feast of the Good Shepherd, as a day to pray for vocations worldwide. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who knows us and is willing to lay down his life for us. Let us join our church in asking god to bless each of us in our chosen vocation and especially for those whose vocation is to the consecrated life.

May 28-30 – The National Catholic Press Association is holding its annual convention “*The Spirit is Rising in the South*” in Atlanta this year. The Catholic Archdiocese is serving as host committee for this event. The James P. Lyke Memorial Mass Choir will be singing at one of the National Catholic Press Associations’ Liturgical Services, on May 28 at 5 p.m., at the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

June 12 - August 1 – Princeton University – Junior Summer Institute at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs is seeking applicants for its 2003 Public Policy and International Affairs Fellowship Program.

The Junior Summer Institute is designed to prepare students of color for graduate study in public and interna-

tional affairs. Applicants must be in their junior year of undergraduate study and demonstrate a strong interest in public service and a career in domestic public policy or international affairs. The program is fully funded and will cover the entire cost of tuition, housing, meals, and transportation. In addition, students will receive a \$1,000.00 stipend. For more information visit Princeton University’s Web site: <http://www.wws.Princeton.EDU/jsi>

June 20-22 – Ambassadors of the Word’s Sankofa Youth Summit VI, “Reaching Up to Higher Ground” in San Francisco, California - sponsored by the Ambassadors of the Word. For info contact Father Chester and Charles Smith, (512) 485-0122.

June 29 - July 19 – The Institute for Black Catholic Studies will begin its 23rd year summer session. The Institute for Black Catholic Studies offers a Master’s Degree Program in Black Catholic Theology, and offers Certificates in a number and Spiritual Enrichment Programs. For more information contact: The Institute for Black Catholic Studies Xavier University of Louisiana, 1 Drexel Drive, Box 49A, New Orleans, LA 70125, (504) 483-7691.

August 1 - August 7 – The Knights and Ladies of Peter Claver will hold its 2003 Convention in Atlanta Georgia, at the Downtown Hilton. The Office for Black Catholic Ministry (OBCM) welcomes the Knights and Ladies of Peter Claver and prays that they will have a successful convention. The Fourth Degree Ladies of Grace Division will be sponsoring a Gospel Extravaganza on Friday

evening, August 1st. This event is a featured fund-raiser to support the education effort of the National Office of the Knights and Ladies of Peter Claver. The OBCM is honored to be involved in a supporting role for this event.

July 19 – The Magdalene Project. The Fourth Annual Meeting of Magdalene Project will be held at St. Anne’s Episcopal Church. The Magdalene Project promotes and celebrates the lives of holy women of the past as models of spiritual transformation for women of today. The keynote speaker will be Diana Hayes, Ph.D., Georgetown University.

July 23-24 – Unity Explosion 2003, “*Our God Is An Awesome God*” will be held in Houston Texas, at the Wyndham-Greenpoint Hotel. For additional information please contact the office of African American Ministries, Catholic Diocese of Galveston-Houston, Phone (713) 659-5461, ext. 257. Web site: www.diogh.org/african.htm.

Happy Mother’s Day – Let us take pause on May 11 to thank our mothers for bringing us into this world, for their nurturing care, for guiding our steps as we commenced our journey of life, for returning us on course, on the straight and narrow towards our Heavenly Father, when we veered in the wrong direction. Let us lift our mothers and all mothers and ask Our God of all Creation to shower them with His Special Blessings.

Happy Fathers’ Day – Let us not forget our fathers and all fathers on June 15. They certainly deserve our best affirmation for the critical

roles they perform in our lives, in protecting the family and in providing for its well-being. They too are instrumental in guiding our steps on our journey to God. Let us lift them up in prayer to the Father of all fathers and ask that He favor them with His generous love and care.



Corpus Christi

May 2 – First Friday Mass, at 11 a.m. (This will be the last one until September.) The Potluck Luncheon is after Mass in the Stone Mountain room.

May 18 - August 24 – Co-ed softball will begin for young adults ages 18 years and older. The cost is \$40.00. For information call Michael McKinnon at 678-344-2461 or email at louiseandmichael@aol.com.

May 31 and June 14 – CPR Training. This training includes the Automatic External Defibrillator (AED). Cost is \$5.00. Checks should be made payable to the American Heart Association. For further information call Bar Kennedy, Parish Nurse at (770) 469-0395 ext. 16.



Our Lady of Lourdes

May – All month the Our Lady of Lourdes Women’s Club will be selling Recipe Books. Cost is \$10.00. Please call the church office at 404.522.6776 for further information.

June 7 & 8 – *Ordination to the Priesthood* – Deacon Ricardo Xavier-Zatwon Bailey will be ordained to the Sacred Order of Presbyter (Priesthood) through the imposition of Hands and the invocation of

the Holy Spirit by His Excellency, The Most Reverend John Francis Donoghue, D.D., Archbishop of Atlanta on Saturday at 10:30 a.m., at the Catholic Cathedral of Christ the King. Father Ricardo



Xavier-Zatwon Bailey will celebrate his Mass of thanksgiving on the Solemnity of Pentecost, Sunday, June 8th at 3 p.m., at Our Lady of

Lourdes Catholic Church.

June 14 – Amazing Grace Liturgical Dancers will be hosting their 2nd Annual Father’s Day Fashion Show on Saturday from 4 p.m. - 7 p.m. in the Katherine Drexel Center on the grounds of Our Lady of Lourdes at 25 Boulevard NE, Atlanta.

June 22 – The Ecumenical Service with our neighbor’s Liberty Baptist Church will be on Sunday, at 1:00 p.m..

June 28 – Prayer Breakfast at 10 a.m. to Benefit the Scholarship Fund of Our Lady of Lourdes Court #300 KPC Ladies Auxiliary. The Loudermilk Center, 40 Courtland NE (Corner of Edgewood & Courtland Streets) Donation: \$25.00. Please contact the church

office at 404.522.6776 for more information.

Lourdes Young Adult Group

May – Lourdes YAG Sports Team sign-up starts.

May 2 – Salsa Lessons start at KADTS Studio with T. James Scott, cost is \$12.00. For more information please call Lani Gustafson at 404.688.0510.

May 4 – Ice Cream Social on Sunday, immediately following the 10:30 Eucharist. All are invited.

May 11 – Mother’s Day Mass hosted by the Lourdes Young Adult Group

May 16 – Lourdes YAG Happy Hour. Hand in Hand, 752 North Highland Avenue (Virginia Highlands)

May 17-18 – Lourdes YAG Two-Day Retreat at Forrest Hills Mountain Resort, Dahlonega, GA.



The Lyke House – AUC

May 3 – Pre-Marriage Workshop by Deacon Fred Sambrone and Connie Sambrone from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m..

May 4 – Closing Mass and Barbecue

May 18 – Commencement for Morehouse and Spelman College

May 19 – Commencement for Clark Atlanta University



Saint Anthony of Padua

May 4 – May Crowning, after 8:30 a.m. Mass

June 8 – Teen Recognition Day at 8:30 a.m. Mass

June 15 – Confirmation, 10:05 a.m. Mass, Archbishop Eusebius Beltran. This will be a Centennial Mass celebrating the first Mass at St. Anthony of Padua Church.

June 28 – Health and Wellness Day (sponsored by St. Anthony’s Health Ministry and 3 other community churches).

St. John the Evangelist

May 2-4 – Knights of Peter Claver Gulf Coast District Conference (Mobile, AL)

May 16-20 – Vacation Bible School from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

May 18 – Breakfast sponsored by KPC & KPCLA after 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. Masses. Please note that this event has changed to the third Sunday of the month.

June 6 – Anointing of the sick at the Saturday Vigil Mass at 5 p.m.

July 27 – Dress Out Ninth Anniversary of KPC/KPCLA

Council and Court 340 and Third Anniversary for Junior Knights and Junior Daughters at the 10:00 a.m. Mass.

St. John’s Youth News

May 4 – Faith Formation at 6:30 p.m.

May 18 – Movie Night at 3 p.m.

June 1 – Sunday Service Project at 1 p.m.

June 8 – Youth Day at Six Flags

June 22-27 – Sonfest Beach Retreat

KPCLA Court 340’s Catholic High School Scholarship – To qualify for one of the \$150 grants, please submit a one-page essay stating “Why Catholic Education is Important.” Send it to the Knights of Peter Claver Ladies Auxiliary Court 340 at St. John the Evangelist.

Sts. Peter and Paul

May 4 – Emmaus Meal at 5 p.m.

May 11 – May Crowning after 8:30 Mass.

May 11 – Mother’s Day Breakfast at 10 a.m.

May 17 – Sts. Peter Claver Regional School Spring Fest from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

May 24 – Mother’s Day Dinner at 5 p.m.



Parish Connection

A quarterly newsletter for connecting parishes through Black Catholic Ministry

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