



# Parish Connection

## November: Black Catholic History Month

As we prepared this edition of the *Parish Connection*, we were mindful of the fact that November is a special month of the year for Catholics of African heritage, for Black Catholics of the African Diaspora. **We claim Novem-**

**ber as Black Catholic History Month.** In doing so, we take pause to remind ourselves of the rich diversity of our Catholic cultural heritage, of the unique circumstances of our human history, and the circumstances under which we experienced

*Charles O. Prejean, Sr. – Director, OBCM*

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ over the years and now. We remember those whose shoulders we stand on today. We also consider the call to us, now on our watch, to continue the Catholic Christian Witness.

It is additionally important to reflect upon whom we are relationally, how we are connected to each other through various associations, at the parish, archdiocesan, national, and international levels. Though our involvement in these associations may be limited by our particular circumstances, it nevertheless can prove to be beneficial and inspirational to be reminded of these associations. Therefore, let us remember the wonderful work that our religious orders of sisters gave us as they strove to better the human estate and facilitate our spiritual journeys. Let us be encouraged to know that there are national organizations of the laity and clergy, as well as individual efforts, striving to serve us similarly. Most assuredly, we have much to celebrate as Catholics of African ancestry and even more for which to be thankful to the God of all creation for His many Blessings.



## Parish Connection and Its Future

*Charles O. Prejean, Sr., OBCM*

The August edition of the *Parish Connection* marked a full year of the quarterly publication. The editorial staff would very much like to know how the readership feels about the Office for Black Catholic Ministry's newsletter. Did it provide relevant information and was it of value to you? How can we improve?

### Are We Meeting Our Stated Goals?

In the inaugural edition, we claimed that the *Parish Connection* would serve as a means of inter-parish communication and sharing. We also claimed that it would provide information that was relevant to Catholics of African Ancestry and to Catholics in general. Also, we wanted the newsletter to engage parishioners in as many phases of its production as possible. Our subjective assessment would conclude that we have met some of these objectives, others only in part, and still others not at all.

### Some Say We Are

We have received compliments and encourage-

*(Continued on page 2)*



*Jesus of the People* won the National Catholic Reporter Jesus 2000 competition. The image was chosen from nearly 1,700 entrants as the representation of Christ for the new millennium.

### Inside this edition...

Tell It Like It Is .....	Page 2
Truth and Reconciliation .....	Page 5
Black Catholic Religious Sisters ....	Page 6
Same Faith Embracing / Cultures ...	Page 7

Acknowledging / Moving Forward .	Page 8
Voices / Black Catholic Congress. . .	Page 9
Parish Announcements .....	Page 11
Congress IX / Reflection .....	Page 12

*(Continued from page 1 – “Parish Connection”)* ment about the newsletter, even from the readership outside the Archdiocese. Among the most cherished of these affirmations was the one from Bishop Leonard J. Olivier, SVD after the May edition of *Parish Connection*, from which the following is excerpted.

*I was delighted to receive the issue of Parish Connection, your newsletter for the Office for Black Catholic Ministry. I think it is a good organ for information and also for support for African American Catholics in your area and for anyone who is interested in the Catholic religion. There is a lot of good information in the letter and I am glad you have begun this initiative with your advisors and supporters. I know people will really*

*appreciate that and I am sure that it will make an impression on the other diocesan offices for Black Catholics. Something like that really shows support and gives ideas on what can be done to give courage and shape to the African American Catholic community . . .*

We certainly want to continue this effort, but we want to improve its relevance. We can do this best with the objective and constructive critiques of our local readers. So please write and let us know what you think.

### Thanks for the Financial Assistance and Support

On a number of occasions, we have asked the core parishes, to whom we would like to believe that we are of some small service, for financial support. We are happy to report

that so far, three parishes have responded most generously and still others are favorably considering support. Our Lady of Lourdes has provided a \$1,500.00 contribution in support of the *Parish Connection*, and St. Anthony of Padua, a \$1,000.00 contribution, and Saints Peter and Paul a \$250.00 contribution. We have used these contributions, in the main, to support the Student Publisher of *Parish Connection*, John C. Phillips, a graduating senior at Morehouse College, and a very active student leader at the Lyke House – the Catholic Center at AUC. John has been a valuable addition to the newsletter and we hope that this experience is of value to him. It is a way to also assist with college expenses.

If the *Parish Connection* is a relevant value, then we

must find a way to enable it to survive financially. We again ask for your financial assistance. We need \$2,200.00 per quarter to achieve financial viability.



We are happy to report that, so far, three parishes have responded most generously, and still others are favorably considering support.

## Tell It Like It Is

*Fr. Giles Conwill, Ph.D.*

The task of the historian is different from that of a journalist. The journalist



Fr. Giles Conwill, Ph.D., Professor of History Morehouse College

chronicles events, while the historian must also provide contextualization and interpretation of those events. As an African-American priest/historian who primarily studies

the Church as it relates to African-Americans, I am deeply saddened by the present crisis affecting our Church; but I am also tremendously proud of the great leadership provided by the Black Bishop of the Belleville Diocese, The Most Reverend Wilton Gregory, as he presides over the National Conference of Bishops. Much reform is needed. I agree with George Weigel, who states in his recent book, *Courage to be Catholic*, that the main reason for the present crisis is that there is an insufficiency of saints. We have not been living up to our call to holiness. If we had been doing so, this crisis would never have occurred. If we are to truly reform our Church, everyone — the laity, priests, and bishops — must authentically live holier lives and observe their vows and other obligations of their states in life.

## Time, Talent and Treasure in Abundance

The Catholic Church has the potential to make an even greater impact on society than it is presently doing. It is the largest multi-ethnic and multi-cultural institution in the world. A sixth of the world's population (1 billion plus) is Roman Catholic. The overwhelming majority is lay. There are 4,200 bishops and 402,000 priests in the world. Forty-six thousand priests serve in the U.S alone. One of the reasons why the media focuses so much publicity on the sexual abuse scandal, is not only the depravity of the deeds and the betrayal of trust involved in these cases, but also the fact that the Roman Catholic Church is such a great institution in society. Notwithstanding the present crisis, I am still proud to be Catholic. And of course, I'm extremely proud to be Black. I am looking forward to thanking God

personally when I shall see Him face to face for making me a member of this incredibly talented and resilient race of people and a sharer in the Mystery of Christ as manifested in this awesome faith.

## An Ideal National Black Catholic Congress Paradigm

This past summer in Chicago, we had another in a series of Black Catholic Congresses. Now, I have written chapters in books, which reflect on the significance of the Black Catholic Congresses, particularly those of the last century. As a historian whose function is to also contextualize and interpret events, I would like to make an observation in the form of a question. Are we now trivializing the concept of a “Congress” when we have gatherings so relatively often, and when these gatherings do not include the grand participa-

tion of all major bodies of African-American Catholics? I look forward to the day when the Black Catholic Congress will be a joint convention, i.e., when all individual conventions/conferences of Black Catholics meet together. The Knights of Peter Claver and the Ladies Auxiliary alone had more than 3,000 attending their national convention when I addressed them this August in Washington, D.C. That's the same number of delegates, which attended the Black Catholic Congress in Chicago. A true "Congress" should have included a grand joint meeting of not only the Knights and Ladies, but also the Black Catholic deacons and priests who constitute the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus, the National Black Sisters' Conference, the National Black Seminarians' Conference, the National Black Catholic Administrators and the Directors of Offices for Black Catholic Ministry, the Black Catholic Theological Symposium, and the scholars and students participating in the Institute for Black Catholic Studies. What a magnificent ideal "Congress" that would be.

### Slavery & Christianity in the U.S.

The early religious history of most of the Africans in the Americas had West African roots. They were practicing either the traditional African religions or Islam. When they were brought to the New World, their exposure to Christianity was not the same for all. The colonizer who enslaved them and the colony to which they were brought determined in large measure the slaves' treatment and the evangelistic efforts expended on their behalf. For instance, the Catholic French, Spanish, and the

Portuguese felt more responsible for the evangelization of their slaves — having come in the names of both Crown and Cross — than did the British. For example, the French Code Noire of 1765 and the Spanish Slave Code of 1789 proclaimed that "slaves must be given education in religious matters; the master must provide for this." The British did not concern themselves with the conversion of Africans until late into the 18<sup>th</sup> century. So, the colony to which the slaves were brought determined which denomination of Christianity they were exposed to. Most of the slave owners of the South were Baptist or Methodist. This is why most Blacks in the South are Baptist today.

### Slavery / Protest Denomination / Evangelization

Before 1740 the African Americans' religious worship system was mainly characterized by their "primitive" beliefs. From 1740-1790 the "Great Awakening" spurred active overtures of evangelization on the part of Protestant Denominations, particularly Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians. Black Baptist churches began to appear as early as the Revolutionary Era with the Silver Bluff Church in Savannah, Georgia (1773 – 75). The African Methodist Episcopal Church has its roots in the 1787 establishment of the Free African Society, when a disgruntled Richard Allen left the discrimination experienced in a Methodist Church to form an African denomination.

All the Christian denominations to some degree acquiesced to the racist policies which have prevailed throughout the various periods of this country's history.

### The Catholic Church and U.S. Slavery

Catholicism in Colonial America was a struggling sect-like foundation with few adequate resources to devote even to its white adherents. The Jesuits and Sulpicians who introduced Catholicism to Colonial America, along with the same ethnic missionaries who later accompanied their own immigrants, found their resources and manpower nearly exhausted with the work at hand. Slavery in general, was perceived by the American Catholic Church as a political issue and an institution of the State. The Church was not to interfere in matters political, therefore she saw her responsibility restricted to that of ensuring the religious education and formation of those in bondage. Some ecclesiastics even emphasized the positive effect of slavery by picturing it as a missionary institution: it facilitated the Christianizing of these "pagan" captives from Africa.

### Sowing the Seeds of Injustice and Reaping the Worldwind of Self-Destruction

During the Civil War era, the issue of slavery divided Catholics along sectional lines in the same way it did the rest of the nation's population. Northern Catholics were generally in sympathy with the Union, while their Southern counterparts tended to support the Confederacy and its aims. When the major Protestant denominations split in the mid-1840's into Northern and Southern branches over the issue of slavery, e.g., "Southern" Baptists - - note how the Methodists later attempted to mend the breach in Methodism by creating the "United"

Methodists — Catholics did not split. However, while there was no official denominational split between Northern and Southern Catholics, there was a brief attempt to gain Vatican acknowledgement of the sovereignty of the Confederacy when the Confederate government sent Bishop Patrick Lynch of Charleston in 1864 as its ambassadorial representative, but Rome accepted him merely in the capacity of an ordinary bishop. While Catholic bishops tried to maintain a stance of political neutrality regarding the Civil War, Catholic officers and soldiers fought in both Union and Confederate armies. Catholic priests served as chaplains for both sides: over 40 for the Union and nearly 30 for the Confederate troops.

### Structuring the Early Black Catholic Evangelization Effort

The bishops acknowledged that this was a national problem, which required a collective and national solution. So, in 1866, 45 bishops from around the country convened in Baltimore the Second Plenary Council. This was the first of several meetings on the national and local levels, which addressed Black Catholic evangelization. The Episcopal leaders requested that a search be undertaken throughout dioceses of this country and Europe for priests and sisters who would devote themselves to the Black apostolate. They sought the establishment of some American society or congregation of clergy and nuns for ministry to Blacks. They agreed to petition the Pope to canonize Benedict the Moor and Martin de Porres so the African-Americans could have their own saintly Models.

*(Continued on page 4)*

*(Continued from page 3  
– “Tell It Like It Is”)*

They requested that Peter Claver be declared not only a saint, but also principal “Patron of the Negroes.” Missions exclusively dedicated to their care were encouraged. Schools and orphanages were built.

A bit later, the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore instituted an annual “Negro and Indian Missions Collection” which was to be taken up throughout the country to support the evangelization of these peoples. It continues to this day.

### Black Catholic Self-Determination

The history of African-American Catholicism represents a rich tapestry of faith. It includes the founding of the three orders of Black women religious: in Baltimore, the Oblate Sisters of Providence (1829); in New Orleans, the Sisters of the Holy Family (1842) — note that both of these orders were founded before the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863; and in Savannah, Georgia, the Franciscan Handmaids of the Most Pure Heart of Mary, presently headquartered in Harlem, New York. The history also includes the story of the first African-American priests, the Healy brothers, Augustus Tolton, Charles Uncles, and a small army of others. It includes the establishment of the Knights and Ladies of Peter Claver — the largest organization of Black Catholics in the world, founded because the Knights of Columbus did not accept Blacks. It also embraces the religious groups and persons who have so effectively ministered to Blacks, such as Katherine Drexel, the Sisters

of the Blessed Sacrament, Xavier University, the Josephites, the Society of the Divine Word, and the countless White pastors and sisters who work so tirelessly in our communities across the nation.

### Active Black Catholic Evangelization

The religious saga of African-American evangelization reveals dedicated and saintly lay persons, too, such as Pierre Toussaint, Daniel Rudd, Thomas Wyatt Turner, Mathilda Beasley, Lena Edwards, Annette May Turner, Beverly Carroll, Tyrone Davis, and Charles Prejean.

It encompasses the workings of the Holy Spirit as it directed the founding of the Federated Colored Catholics (the forerunner of the National Office for Black Catholics), the Clergy and Sisters’ Conferences, the Secretariat, the many offices of Black Catholic Ministry around the country, and the National Black Catholic Congresses of the last and present centuries.

The history of Black American Catholicism has been enriched by passionate preachers like Jim Goode and George Stallings; extremely talented musicians like Rawn Harbor, Grayson Brown, and Leon Roberts; visionaries like Joseph Davis, Joseph Slattery, James Lyke and Edward Branch; shepherd-hearted pastors like Bill Norvell, Teresite Wind, Michael Phleger, and John Adamski; stalwart pioneers like Clarence Williams; gifted thinkers like Shawn Copeland, Jamie Phelps, Bede Abrams, Joseph Nieron, Joseph Brown, and Cyprian Davis; and even calls for a new rite.

### Understanding the History and Culture of Black Catholics

The prophetic call of African-American Catholics challenges their Church to undertake liturgical adaptation that takes Black culture seriously, to engage in preaching and ministry that give perspective and impetus to Black Catholic empowerment, and to redress the racism, tokenism and lack of affirmative action in the Church, especially as shown by the failure to promote more Black bishops who are really in touch with their people’s needs.

### Preparing for Ministry to Black Catholics

The Church must also address the need for seminary faculty and students to become more sensitive to and informed about Black culture and history. We in the Black community are becoming rather tired of continually having thrust on us pastors and priests who have so little knowledge of our culture and history. The seminary is where such training should initially take place, for all candidates. We also desperately need religious education resources with Black and multiethnic awareness. And finally, given the diminution of priestly vocations, the Church must progressively deal with the problematics of Black lay leadership development in a white, clergy-dominated, hierarchically structured Church.

### The Feminine Soul of the Christian Church

What I am now about to state is a sensitive matter, but a systems analysis of the institution indicates that the Christian Church — unlike Islam and other world religions — may have a male hierarchy, but it has

a feminine soul. Christianity is the only major world religion that has a higher proportion of women than men in its membership. Men have difficulty relating to the feminine Church-soul. The sense of the feminine dominance can be seen in songs and hymns that are sung. (They are usually in a too-high key for male singing, and seem a bit too sweet for the really male members of our species.) The liturgy, the lace, the flowing vestments, the iconography, the architecture, the liturgical dance: they are more attuned to women than to men. Also, ironically, the Catholic hierarchical structure seems to have great difficulty accepting strong Black males in leadership positions. Does Black male physical fortitude present a threat to the White feminine soul of the Christian Church? Sorry if I’ve stepped on some toes here, but we scholars must “Tell it like it is.”

### Cultural Diversity and Equal Standing for All

Yes, African-American Catholics, with their culture and history, throw down the gauntlet of prophetic challenge to the Church in the same way that Black Americans have presented a challenge to this nation. The United States claims to hold certain truths to be inalienable. Black Americans have been America’s conscience, goading it to live up to that claim. Similarly, African-American Catholics challenge their Church to live up to its claim of “catholicity” so that other “others” may truly feel at home in this eschatologically redeemed community which is united in the threefold unity of creed, cult, and code, and which — most importantly — professes the Lordship of Jesus Christ.



## Truth and Reconciliation: Black Catholic Style

Fr. Edward B. Branch, D. Min.



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

Perhaps the great wonder and miracle of our age is the ending of apartheid in South Africa with no bloodshed. The great achievement is due to the almost single-handed work of Archbishop Desmond Tutu. His call for truth and reconciliation as a product of his Ubuntu philosophy and Christian conviction about reconciliation ought to give us here in the Church of Atlanta some cause for pause as we consider the results of the recent *Ninth Black Catholic Congress*.

### Determination Must Prevail

This was a Congress, the fourth in modern times, which did not promise much to most of us who are veterans of the Black Catholic movement. We had, after all, framed a thorough going agenda for Black Catholics in the United States, fifteen or more years ago. It appeared that little by way of accountability on the part of our bishops or even our heads of

Offices for Black Catholic Ministry (where they survive) had been exacted since that meeting concluded. Congress Eight was consumed with the dedication of the Chapel of Our Mother of Africa and the sheer logistics of moving thousands of people around. Those of us in the trenches were overwhelmed with the prospect of convening with a less than stellar prospect of new ground being tilled or old ground being fertilized. We were pleasantly surprised.

### Let Us Not Drop The Vessel

It was a smaller gathering to be sure. Delegates from the various dioceses across the country were assembled. As the proceedings progressed the parameters became clear. Content presentations were given, reflections were carried on to help focus and inform the delegates thinking. Prayer was the hallmark of the event. The global context of our condition wove the strands to issue formation. By Friday evening the direction was clearly set and a tone established. *For the first time in Roman Catholic history, an African Bishop apologized to African Americans for African responsibility in the slave trade.* Saturday morning we were to consider proposed agenda components and by Saturday evening decide on priorities and trim superfluities. By Sunday morning the task was complete and there remained only one more process for the assembly. It was to be homilized into tears and inspired to return with a treasure carried in earthen vessels to be sure. We hope that the vessel will not be dropped and its contents spilled before the next Congress.

### The External Problematic

What are important to note about the list of Black Catholic imperatives coming from the Congress, are those elements that are shared with the concerns of the first Congress in 1889. The treasure is in seven vessels of concern: spirituality, parish life, young adults, Catholic Education, Social Justice, Racism, Africa, and HIV/AIDS. Catholic Education, Social Justice, Racism, and the African Church were all there in 1889 and seem to be intractable issues. While we have become more sophisticated in the black community about what is happening to us, our leadership seems to labor with the same assumptions about the nature of racism and what its remedies would be. After a century of protest and marches and book writings, and social scientific research, our leadership remains trapped in an unfruitful cycle of behaviors, which seem to ignore these resources. The last document addressing the issue in our Church was in 1990, "*Brothers and Sisters to Us, Racism in Our Day.*" Curiously, the document used the terms racism and prejudice as synonyms, a matter of personal and individual relationships. The structural difference between the two has made all the difference in the world in various corners of our culture. The difference may explain why right here in **Atlanta Black seminarians are disappearing** from our seminaries with no one of their cultural

persuasion able to explain why or in any way involved in the decision to terminate their vocational aspirations. The difference between the two might explain why **Catholic schools in the Black communities of the nation are disappearing** with little commentary, little involvement or **little input from Black Catholics at decision-making levels.** Why do those schools, which remain, continue to be assessed with a different set of criteria for academic excellence and fiscal management?

### The Internal Problematic

The Congress underscored for me the necessity for us as Black Catholics to look at our complicity in our own oppression. The fact is we have so often thought of ourselves in Eurocentric terms denying our beauty as creatures of God and destroying the fabric of justice and peace among ourselves. The fact is the number of abortions in the black community now exceeds the number of slaves killed in the middle passage. The fact is that too many Black Catholics of means have separated themselves from Catholic schools without engaging in the battle to keep them solvent and relevant. It is we ourselves who have often abandoned our poor brothers and sisters to the best efforts of well meaning but ill advised others.

### Embracing the Cure of Ubuntu

We as a church must ask the same questions and bring the same wisdom to our circumstance, which Desmond Tutu brought to South Africa's moment of urgency.

The Ubuntu philosophy

(Continued on page 10)

## Black Catholic Religious Sisters

*Mrs. Paulette Norvell Lewis*



Paulette Norvell Lewis, Parishioner,  
St. Anthony's Catholic Church

In the first half of the nineteenth century, several attempts were made to start religious congregations of black women in the United States. Only three, however, have survived: The Oblate Sisters of Providence based in Baltimore, Maryland, the Sisters of the Holy Family based in New Orleans, Louisiana, and the Handmaids of the Most Pure Heart of Mary\* based in Harlem, New York. It is interesting to note that the first two congregations were brought to reality with the assistance of French priests and the commitment of Haitian women.

### The First Black Catholic Religious Order

The Oblate Sisters of Providence were founded in Baltimore, Maryland 1829 by Father Jacques Hector Joubert. Fr. Joubert came to Baltimore by way of Cuba and Haiti where he served as a government official. After his ordination in 1810, he was assigned to a Haitian refugee colony in Baltimore, Maryland. He immediately realized that he would have great difficulty teaching the Haitian children about Catholicism

because they could not read. Two Haitian women in the community, Elizabeth Lange and Marie Madeleine Balas, had already started a free school in their own home and they had also considered consecrating their lives to God as religious. When he learned of this, he intervened and began talking with the bishop about establishing a religious community for black women. The bishop's response was surprisingly very positive.

In 1829, a third Haitian woman, Rosine Boegue, joined Elizabeth and Marie Madeleine and on July 2, 1929, the Feast of the Visitation, the three took religious vows. Father Joubert decided to name the new congregation the Oblate Sisters of Providence. The word "oblate" means "gift" or "offering". These Sisters were a gift to the Haitian community and to God. They offered their lives to God in service of "the least of these"—uneducated blacks, the sick and poor. At the time, eleven girls were already enrolled in the school as boarders and nine as day students.

### Papal Recognition

Pope Gregory XVI officially approved this new religious community in 1831 and granted the Sisters permission to reserve the Blessed Sacrament in their convent. The Sisters went on to establish orphanages, schools and to do social work in New Jersey, Baltimore, Buffalo, Miami and Costa Rico.

### The Sisters of the Holy Family

After many years of

struggling to start a religious congregation, Henriette Delille-Sarpy, a woman of racially mixed heritage, Juliette Gaudin, a Haitian from Cuba, and Marie Jeanne Aliquot, a French woman, finally got the intervention they needed to make their dream a reality. A French priest, Abbe' Rousselon, supported the efforts of the women because he realized that they could be a tremendous help in teaching the black children in his new parish. On November 21, 1842, the Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the second black religious congregation in the country was established. Although they had previously been known as the Sisters of the Presentation, Abbe' Rousselon insisted that they be called the Sisters of the Holy Family. Sadly, Marie-Jeanne Aliquot, who had worked with Henriette toward this goal since 1836, could not belong to the new community because she was white and civil law did not permit whites and blacks to live together. It was not until 1872, and only because of the outstanding service they had rendered to people of New Orleans, that the Sisters of the Holy Family finally obtained the right to wear religious habits in public. They did not receive canonical recognition until 1949, more than a hundred years after they had been established.

### Dwindling Numbers and an Aging Congregation

Today, there are 170 Sisters of the Holy Family and the average age is 70. These Sisters continue to serve the black community as teachers and nurses and more recently, in parenting and family ministries. They have schools

in Washington, D. C. Texas, Tennessee, Louisiana, and the Republic of Belize. The Holy Family Sisters opened the first black Catholic Nursing Home in the United States.

Today, the Oblate Sisters number 105 and their average age is 67. Because of their dwindling numbers and the aging of their congregation, the Sisters have had to close some of their schools and move into less strenuous ministries such as visiting the sick and elderly.

### Invaluable Service

The Sisters of both these religious congregations have made tremendous contributions to black Catholic communities in the United States and to the people of color that they serve in their foreign missions. They have provided education, pastoral assistance, orphanages, social services, and nursing care for many who would not have been served otherwise. In 1832 when the City of Baltimore sought assistance with the care of indigents sick with cholera, all four Oblate Sisters immediately volunteered to help. Similarly, during the yellow fever epidemic of 1853, the Holy Family Sisters were indispensable in caring for poor blacks in New Orleans.

### Prosperous Ministries in Difficult Times

Over the years, both congregations of Sisters have experienced rejection, indifference, overt hostility, and bigotry within the Church and in society. Ironically, they owe their existence and survival to the existence of this unchristian behavior. If segregation had not existed, black women with religious vocations would simply have joined white

congregations. And, if bigotry had not endured, these black religious congregations would not have grown and prospered. Many black Sisters joined these communities because white congregations, most often those, who taught and inspired them in school, would not accept black women. In spite of these painful beginnings, black Sisters have remained faithful to the Church and to their religious vocations.

### The Need for Vocations is Great

So, why are there not more black religious vocations today? Sister Judith Therese Barial, a Holy Family Sister, has given a lot of thought to this question. She stated that, like many of her contemporaries, her vocation was fostered in the home. Because many families today are generally less stable than when she was young and more involved in a broad range of social and secular activities, vocations are not being fostered in the same way. Sister Judith believes that black girls today are no less spiritual than she or her contemporaries were. However, they do have many more secular distractions and a broad range of careers from which to choose. When she became a Sister, the primary careers available to young black girls were nursing or teaching. She went on to say that young people today are not inclined to make long-term commitments. She believes that more young black women would enter religious life if they could commit to a limited period of time. Sister Charlotte Marshall, an Oblate Sister, added that these same factors account for the fact that black women today enter religious life at a much older

age than they did before the 1970s. The average age of a woman joining the Oblate Sisters is now 40.

### Are the Sounds of the Times Too Loud to Hear the Call?

Sister Judith and Sister Charlotte were asked whether they thought black women in general had any characteristics that made them uniquely suited for religious life. Both thought those black women religious, in the unique traditions of their mothers and grandmothers, were strong, dedicated, faith-full and faithful, nurturing, long-suffering, spiritual and prayerful.

### Jim Crow in the Church

Both Sisters Judith and Charlotte faced discrimination when they tried to enter religious life. Sister Charlotte was ready to “forget it” after she was rejected by the congregation of white Sisters who taught her and who had befriended her family. Her father however, would not hear of it. He told her “You don’t just forget what you want to do.” Soon after, he introduced her to a white woman whose racially mixed daughter was an Oblate. The rest is history—Sister Charlotte recently celebrated her fiftieth anniversary in religious life.

Sister Judith knew in grade school that she wanted to enter religious life but she also knew that the community of Irish Sisters who taught her in grade school did not accept black women. Her mother learned of the boarding school in New Orleans operated by the Sisters of the Holy Family and enrolled her there. Even though she was shy, the Sisters saw her potential and contrib-

uted tremendously to her personal, academic, and spiritual development. After graduation from high school, it was a natural transition for her to join these Sisters whom she admired and who looked so much like her own mother and aunts. The confidence that she gained under their guidance later empowered her to do things she could never have imagined; such as, start a high school for high-risk children in the Republic of Belize.

### Let us Recognize our Black Saints

The first women to join the Oblate Sisters of Providence and the Sisters of the Holy Family are real unsung “sheroes”. Rome has recently accepted papers supporting the canonization of Mother Elizabeth Lange, founder of the Oblates, and the Sisters prayerfully anticipate that the process will begin soon. Under the leadership of Sister Annette Beacham (Oblates) and Sister Silvia Thibodeaux (Holy Family) and the Mothers General who preceded them, black Sisters in these congregations continue to be contemporary unsung “sheroes.” These women of God are surely a blessing to the Black Catholic community in the United States and we owe them a real debt of gratitude. Perhaps when their stories of courage, prayer, service and adventure are told, more young black women will be inspired by the Holy Spirit to answer the call to religious life.

\* The Handmaids of the Most Pure Heart of Mary will be discussed in a later edition.

Primary resource: [The History of Black Catholics in the United States](#) by Cyprian Davis.



## Same Faith Embracing Different Cultures

*Martin Omosola  
Newsletter Editorial Staff*

### Diversity in the Catholic Community

As the city of Atlanta expands, so do the various ethnic groups living in it and its suburbs. Among these ethnic groups are people from Africa, Haiti and the Caribbean. Most of them who are Catholics have been practicing the faith for years before leaving their countries. On arrival in Atlanta, they still love the Church and each family or individual looks for the nearest parish to sign up for membership.

The Catholic Church, under the spiritual leadership of the Pope, is one entity that unites its members spiritually through the celebration of Mass all over the world. However, because of the diversity of race, ethnicity and cultural background, the use of different languages at Mass celebration has become a necessity for several communities around the world, including the Africans in Diaspora.

### One Cup, One Bread and Different Cultural Perspectives

Two such communities of African origin are intricately tied to their past when celebrating the Holy Eucharist on Sundays. The “Haitian Community” of Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church, Decatur, worships in bilingual language every Sunday, using “Creole” and French; while the “Nigerian (Igbo) Mass” group of St. Anthony’s Catholic

*(Continued on page 10)*

## Acknowledging the Past and Moving Forward

*Congress IX, Black Catholic Leadership in the Twentieth First Century, Solidarity in Action: From the Black Catholic Clergy Perspective*

Charles O. Prejean, Sr., Director, OBCM



Fr. Chester Smith, SVD, President, National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus (NBCCC), and Charles O. Prejean, Sr., Director, Office for Black Catholic Ministry

The IX National Black Catholic Congress held its commencement session August 29 through September 1, 2002. That is to say, Congress IX began then and will continue for the next five years. Over three thousand Catholics attended these opening activities. They included representatives of the Catholic hierarchy, clergy, religious, and the laity. To no one's surprise, the overwhelming majority of the attendees were African American Catholics.

To capture the meaning and direction of Congress IX, a number of perspectives will appear in this edition of the *Parish Connection*. The effort here attempts to provide an overview from the Black Catholic Clergy. It takes the form of an interview with Fr. Chester Smith, SVD, President of the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus (NBCCC), statements from the Atlanta

delegates and a mission statement from Fr. Edward Branch, D. Min.

An interview with Fr. Chester Smith, S.V.D. follows:

**COP:** Thanks so much, Fr. Chester, for agreeing to share your thoughts, as President of the NBCCC, about Congress IX. It is our understanding that the NBCCC met earlier this week (August 27-28 at the Society of the Divine Word Techny Conference Center). Could you share with us NBCCC's thoughts about Congress IX?

**Fr. Chester:** I am happy to have this opportunity to chat with the *Parish Connection Newsletter*, an excellent organ for sharing information and for enabling the work of evangelization. The meeting we held was in conjunction with the Pan-African Roman Catholic Clergy Conference. We made plans to further enhance the collaborative among the clergy of African descent worldwide and to explore ways to provide concrete mutual support. The NBCCC also discussed ways to support the realization of the Goal of Congress IX, particularly the eight issue areas of its Action Plan. An important role that the Black Catholic Clergy can perform in this regard is one of advocacy. We can use our standing as clergy to garner official diocesan support for the Action Plan of Congress IX. I certainly plan, in this regard, to work closely with the Office of the National Black Catholic Congress and with the Executive Director, Beverly Carroll, of the Secretariat for African American Catholics, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, and through other associations with the Catholic Episcopacy. I shall also urge

the Black Catholic clergy, ministering as retreat masters, revivalists, seminar presenters, and trainers, to carry the theme and goal of Congress IX in these and similar engagements.

**COP:** Doubtless, the eight issue areas of the Action Plan are important to African American Catholics. The success of its implementation is certainly dependent upon the qualitative involvement of lay leadership in parishes and dioceses. What are some recommendations that you would offer to them?

**Fr. Chester:** The successful implementation of the Congress IX Action Plan is very much dependent upon its acceptance by local bishops and pastors. It is very important that they accept and support the legitimacy of the Congress IX Action Plan, and its relevance as a means to further the spiritual and social wellbeing of Catholics of

Action Plan.

I realize the difficulty that exist in some of our majority Black Catholic parishes because of the limited understanding of Black Catholic historical and cultural experiences. It would be very beneficial to those pastors who have these limitations to receive more extensive preparatory training before taking up their assignments. Just as religious missionary orders prepared their men and women for their assignments overseas, dioceses should consider similar forms of preparatory training regiments. The course work at the Institute for Black Catholic Studies at Xavier University of Louisiana, the National Black Catholic Congress' Annual Pastoring Workshop, and similar training opportunities, would be very helpful preparations for their pastoral ministry.



African ancestry. I would recommend that local dioceses, with the strong supportive urgings of the pastors, incorporate the eight Principles of the Congress Action Plan into their respective Diocesan Strategic Pastoral Plans. The parishes' lay leadership should work very closely with their pastors and together seek to gain support of the diocesan leadership. Once this is accomplished, each parish should develop how best to implement the Congress IX

**COP:** You seem to speak with considerable passion about parish life in the majority African American Catholic parishes, would you mind elaborating a little more on this subject?

**Fr. Chester:** Yes, I do feel strongly about the spiritual health of our people. I have been thinking a lot about this, especially as we prepare to launch Congress IX, and about how our parish leadership is structured. I am convinced that

there is a direct and effective correlation between the relevance of the parish leadership model and the spiritual health of parish life and with the administrative viability of the parish. Of course I am raising an issue that is rooted in Canon Law. Nevertheless, one must raise the relevant questions, particularly in consideration of what is best for the spiritual wellbeing of the people of God. It is also fitting to raise these issues at the beginning of the new millennium, and as we attempt to discern God's will for His people in His New Age. Is the current parish structure sensitive enough to the history and culture of Black Catholics and are our people getting the spiritual nurturing that they truly need to fulfill God's plan for them? What is the efficacy of granting administrative finality to the pastor, in addition to his sacramental leadership? Does the former hinder or enable the latter? Does the current model underutilize the gifts of lay leadership? Is there another and better parish leadership model that could best serve the parish? I do not have the answers to these questions, but I feel confident that answers can be found. These and similar ones must be raised because at issue is the spiritual wellbeing of our people. I am becoming more convinced that there is no generic cultural and parish administrative model that fits all Catholic cultural heritages.

**COP:** Can you speak more specifically about how the NBCCC will go about supporting the Congress IX ACTION PLAN.

**Fr. Chester:** Our specific plans are still in the development stage, but I can offer a

general sense of the direction that the NBCCC intends to go. I intend to guide the NBCCC in the advocacy effort with the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, to generate diocesan support for the Congress IX Action Plan. All in all, it is my intention to become more actively involved in collaborative efforts to ensure the successful implementation of the Congress IX Action Plan. Additionally, I intend to work closely with the Office of the National Black Catholic Congress, with the Secretariat for African American Catholics, the National Black Catholic Sisters Conference, the National Association of Black Catholic Administrators, and others. It is imperative that the Black Catholic leadership, at the national level, provides ongoing support and encouragement to the local parishes' efforts to implement the Congress IX Action Plan. We cannot allow the disconnect between the national and local efforts, that happened after the last two Congresses, to occur again. The successful workings of Congress, over the next five years, need the active and substantive involvement of the National Black Catholic Leadership.

**COP:** Thank you so much Fr. Chester for your time and for sharing with us your thoughts and plans as these relate to the very important work of Congress IX. We would like to be able to touch bases with you periodically for updates on the work of the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus.

**Fr. Chester:** Thank you and I too would like to stay in touch. God bless.

☪ ☪ ☪

## Voices from the Black Catholic Congress

Will Thomas  
Newsletter Editorial Staff

Six parishes of the Atlanta Archdiocese, and Lyke House – the Catholic Center at Atlanta University Center, sent official delegates to NBCC IX in Chicago. The parishes from Atlanta were: *Most Blessed Sacrament, Our Lady of Lourdes, St. Anthony of Padua, and St. Paul of the Cross*; from Hapeville: *St. John the Evangelist*; from Stone Mountain: *Corpus Christi*; and from Decatur: *Sts. Peter and Paul*. Other priests, deacons and lay people from North Georgia attended, in addition to the delegates.

services that took place, from the opening Mass to the Mass for Reconciliation.” Prejean added that he was also “impressed by the leadership the clergy showed at the congress. I got a sense that they understood the issues that we were dealing with in our parishes.”

✧

“We (Catholics) are good at putting together documents, but not following through with them. We talk the talk, but don't walk the walk,” said **Fr. Edward Branch**, Catholic Chaplain of Lyke House at AUC. “The church must acknowledge racism as a structural construct rather than as simple personal prejudice.”

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Atlanta Delegates to the National Black Catholic Congress IX, held in Chicago, IL, August 29 – September 1, 2002

### Atlanta Delegates Speak Out

“The entire congress was spiritually uplifting and very inspirational,” said **Charles Prejean**, *Director of the Atlanta Archdiocesan Office for Black Catholic Ministry*. “I was amazed by the large number of lay people that were assembled. I was really impressed by the worship

“Youth and young adults are a powerful potential for the church,” said **Dustin Simmons**, *a student at Morehouse College, Atlanta, and a Lyke House delegate*. “I felt that the sessions were helpful; it was great that the youth had a chance to voice their opinions openly without feeling intimidated by their parents.”

*(Continued on page 10)*

*(Continued from page 5 – “Truth & Reconcil . . .”)*

of embrace holds promise for us. It seeks reconciliation not justice. To assume justice as our goal is to seek an equality, which cannot be achieved and may not be desirable. To seek reconciliation assumes a memory of one’s cultural history whether European or African. It assumes appreciation of the offender and the offended histories alike. Standing on the platform of truth, one is able to approach another with integrity. The truth is, white America has not been enabled to own its unconscious racism. **Simply because lynchings have ceased and lunch counters are liberated does not mean we are all home free.** Life sentences and “three strikes, you’re out” have replaced lynching. Permissive standard educational achievement and resources have replaced segregated lunch counters. Where we once took the moral high ground and provided liberating education for poor people, our Church in America has begun to say suburban Catholics only need apply.

**Drinking the New Wine from the New Wineskin!**

What this Congress shows us is that our institutional and our corporate racial memory are weak. We seem destined to repeat the same mistakes. The Black Catholic agenda responds to this need. It asks those in authority to reach out and embrace. It asks those who are historically excluded to consider their complicity in their own oppression. Speaking the truth to authority rather than keeping quiet for the sake of personal comfort is a matter of moral and ethical integrity. It

is the call of grace to us. This Ubuntu philosophy of embrace which Bishop Tutu seats in the Gospel call to reconciliation may well be the new wineskin for a new wine of community in our Church.

Every serious Black Catholic ought to get hold of the document and make his/her own goals and objectives accordingly. **If you’re not serious, no need to hang around.**



*(Continued from page 7 – “Same Faith”)*

Church, Atlanta, celebrates the Mass in “Igbo” on the second Sunday of every month. At the center of this spiritual fulfill-



Fr. John Ugochuku, Homolist

ment are two hard-working priests: Fr. Maxis Saint-Fleur, spiritual leader of the Haitian community, and Fr. Michael Onyekuru, spiritual leader of the Nigerian community.

Asked why she and her group preferred celebrating Mass in the Haitian languages with drums and music, Chantale Mompoint, President of the Haitian Community of Catholics said: “It is more spiritual for the fact that we are worshipping in our own language. I

live here (in Georgia) since I was ten and I have gone to American Masses. But being able to go to your own culture, celebrating in your own culture and worshipping in your own language is totally different. Our congregation finds Mass more lively when we beat drums. You get people more involved with the music that you play. To me, you have to use whatever means available to you to reach out to the masses.”

Raising the children of Nigerian parents, physically and spiritually, is a major concern for Dr. Ifeanyi Anikpe, President of the Nigerian Mass group. By worshipping together with many parents and their children, and holding meetings, parties and recreational activities after Mass, Dr. Anikpe states that his group is able to inculcate into their children the shared values of his tribe which the youth will miss if the monthly Nigerian Mass does not exist.



*(Continued from page 9 – “Voices from Congress”)*

“The youth and young adult salute was such a blessing for us all,” said **Gloria Patrick, delegate and**

*full-time youth minister at Sts. Peter and Paul Church.* “It was inspiring to see the youth ministering to us through song, dance, and even by preaching. We have to utilize these gifts that the youth have and use them to empower our church.”



“What has to happen, is that we need to communicate to the archdiocese our experiences at the congress as well as the pastoral plan,” said **Jeanette Barker, delegate from St. Paul of the Cross Church.** “I would like to see some possible financing behind the initiatives from the congress, but not only to the black Catholic churches, but also to the white ones as well, because the issues we addressed at the congress need to be addressed there as well if we truly are a universal church.”



According to Mr. Prejean, the convening of Congress IX was just the beginning. **“The congress is not over, it’s only convened.** This is an ongoing process that lasts five years and if implemented, will help the evangelization of all Africans and those of African descent in the Diaspora.”



Delegates to the National Black Catholic Congress IX in Chicago, IL, 8/29 - 9/1/02

## Parish Calendar Announcements



### Black Catholic History Month Dates

The  
National  
Black

Catholic Clergy Caucus (NBCCC) of the United States voted on Tuesday, July 24, 1990 while meeting in convention at Fordham University in New York, to establish Nov. as **Black Catholic History Month**. The reason behind the selection of the month of Nov. was the number of important dates to Catholics of African descent that fell within this month:

Nov. 1 – All Saints Day: an opportunity to review the lives of the hundreds of Saints of African descent in the first 300 years of the Church.

Nov. 2 – All Souls Day: a time to remember all the Africans lost to cruel treatment in the Middle Passage crossing of the Atlantic Ocean.

Nov. 3 – Feast of St. Martin de Porres, the only saint of African descent in this hemisphere.

Nov. 13 – The birth of St. Augustine in 354 AD, the first Doctor of the Church from North Africa.

Nov. 20 – The death of Zumbi of Palmares in Brazil, South American founder of a free state for Blacks.



### Corpus Christi

From Now until Dec. 27 – Friday Nights at the Movies.

Nov. 15 – A Gathering of Women Weekend Retreat.

Date TBA – Christmas Concert.



### Our Lady of Lourdes

Ladies Auxiliary Court #300

Activities:

Nov. 23 – Feather Party – Lourdes Cafeteria on Sat. from 12 p.m. – 5 p.m. Play Bingo! Win door prizes and all the trimmings for your Thanksgiving Dinner.

Dec. 1 – Holiday Bazaar – Lourdes Cafeteria Sun. from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m..

Lourdes Young Adult Group:

Nov. 15 – Group Happy Hour – Come out and join the Lourdes Young Adults every third Friday of the month as they get together to mix and mingle at various establishments through out Atlanta. For more information please contact Anne-Marie Bowen at [skyesgodmommy@hotmail.com](mailto:skyesgodmommy@hotmail.com)

Nov. 22 – Friday Pizza and Movie Night – Come join the members of Lourdes Young Group and St. Paul of the Cross for pizza and a movie. For more information please contact Shannon Brown at [shannon272@yahoo.com](mailto:shannon272@yahoo.com).

Social Action Committee:

Dec. 6 – On Fri. at 7p.m., Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church will be hosting the African Children's Choir. The African Children's Choir is composed of African children ages 5 through 12, who have lost one or both of their parents. They represent all the children of a continent so often wrought with famine and war. Watch as they demonstrate the potential of

these children to become strong leaders for a better future in their land. The concert will be free of charge, and there will be a free-will offering during the performance to help the ministry work with needy children in Africa.



### Saints Peter and Paul

Nov. 3, 10, & 17 – Parish Food Drive.

Nov. 8 – Annual Men's Retreat at the Carmel Retreat Center in Hoschton. The cost of the retreat is \$75.00. For additional information, please call Deacon Alfred Mitchell at (404) 885-7407 or Mr. Val Dorsey at (404) 241-7535.

Nov. 10 – Christmas Bazaar for Our Lady of Perpetual Help Cancer Home after all the weekend Masses.

Nov. 27 – Knights of Peter Claver Turkey Frying at 3 p.m.

Dec. 7 – Christmas Party at Beverly Glenwood Nursing Home from 2-6 p.m.

Dec. 15 – St. Nicholas Breakfast at 10 a.m.

Dec. 21 – St. Vincent de Paul Christmas Party from 3-5 p.m.

Dec. 22 – Christmas Spirit Tour of Homes from 7-10 p.m.

Dec. 29 – KPCLA Kwanzaa Celebration.

Jan. 5 – B.I.B. (Better Infant Births) Layette Collection, at all the weekend Masses.

Jan. 12 – Seniors Appreciation at 2 p.m., sponsored by the Umoja Youth.

Jan. 26 – Catholic Schools Week, Open House at St. Peter Claver.

### The Lyke House

Daily Mass Every M-T-W-F at 5:30 p.m..

Sunday Mass at 10 a.m.

Every Tues. – Liturgy Committee 4:30 p.m..

Choir Rehearsal 6:30 p.m..

Every Weds. – Bible Study at 7:30 p.m..

Every Thurs. – Chess Training and Chess Program at 8p.m..

Newman Officer Meetings @ 5p.m..

Every Fri. – Fun Friday (Movies, Food, Games).

Nov. 1 – All Saints Mass at 7 p.m..

Nov. 16 – Service Saturday at 7AM.

Nov. 19 – Open Mic Night at 6:30 p.m..

Dec. 6 – Christmas Party, Time TBA.

Dec. 8 – Last Mass of the semester.

Jan. 12 – First Mass of the Semester.

March 8 – March 17 – Heritage Pilgrimage to Lalibela and Rome.

Total Package Price \$3,795 per person, \$1,800 per student.

For more info contact the Lyke House at (404) 755-2646 or via e-mail at [lykehouse@aol.com](mailto:lykehouse@aol.com).

*(Continued on page 12)*

*(Continued from page 11 - Parish Announcements)*

**Catholic Social Services**

Nov. 2 – The Catholic Campaign for Human Development and Catholic Social Services, Inc. are hosting a Social Justice Educational Event, “From Charity to Justice,” at the Lyke House. It will be held on Sat. from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Meals will be provided.

To RSVP, please call (404) 885-7265.

Nov. – Please consider supporting the U.S. Bishops Anti -Poverty collection that is taken to combat the root causes of injustices and supports many of the low-income funded groups in the surrounding neighborhoods in the Atlanta Archdiocese. For more info visit [www.povertyusa.org](http://www.povertyusa.org). ✨ ✨

**Nigerian Catholic Community of Atlanta**

Every Second Sunday of the Month – Nigerian (Igbo) Mass at 2 p.m. at St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church.

Jan. 1 – New Year Nigerian (Igbo) Mass at 10 a.m. at the Cathedral of Christ the King, Reception immediately after.

**Haitian Catholic Community of Atlanta**

Every Sunday – French/ Creole Mass at 4 p.m. at Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church in Decatur. ✨ ✨

**The Atlanta Archdiocesan Office for Black Catholic Ministry**

Nov. 9 – Congress IX Day of Reflection at St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church in Hapeville, GA. 11 p.m. – 2 p.m.

Jan. 18, 2003 – The 2003 Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Eucharistic Service. The 2003 M. L. King, Jr. Memorial Service will be held at the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. **Most**

**Reverend John F. Donoghue**, *Archbishop of Atlanta* will serve as the principal celebrant, and **Most Reverend George V. Murry, S.J.**, *Bishop of the Diocese of St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands*, will give the homily. The Memorial Eucharistic Service will begin at **2:00 p.m.** It will be followed by a reception. Parking will be available, free of charge, in the parking lot next to the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. ✨ ✨

**The National Black Catholic Scene**

Dec. 11 – New Edition! of the *Lead Me, Guide Me Hymnal* is in the works. The

first meeting, to be held in Chicago, will shape the project and name the core committees that will revise the *Lead Me, Guide Me Hymnal*. For more information, contact Bob Batastini, Vice President, GIA Publications (708) 496-3800.

Dec. – Advent Reflections for Peace and Healing by Rev. Warren Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney – a collection of prayers and reflections to help us heal the wounds caused by injustice, racism, sexism and intolerance and to accept the gift of peace that Jesus has come to give to us. Call Liguori Publications to order: (800) 325-9521.



**St. Anthony of Padua**

Nov. 8 – Centennial Dinner Dance Celebrating “100 Years of Blessings” at the Atlanta Plaza Hotel. Call (404) 758-8861 for reservations.

Nov. 10 – Centennial Men’s Day Program, “Building on Our Heritage — Creating Our Future.”

Dec. 8 – Knights of Peter Claver Ladies Auxiliary Annual Senior Citizens Christmas Party at 3:00 p.m. (Site – TBA)

Dec. 15 – AIDS Awareness Sunday at 8:30 Mass

Dec. 24 – Children’s Christmas Mass at 7:00 p.m.

**Congress IX Day of Reflection**

*Mr. Charles O. Prejean, Sr. Director, OBCM*

The Atlanta delegation to Congress IX recently held a debriefing meeting to share its thoughts about this experience and to discern how best to share the mandate of Congress IX with the Atlanta Catholic faith community.

**Atlanta Delegates Critique their Congress Experience**

In general, all concluded that the Congress IX worship services were spiritually meaningful and beneficial, and that the working sessions were instructive. There was also general agreement that the Congress IX Action Plan, though a bit ambitious, represented relevant issues and challenges in which the lay leadership should be involved. In fact, the delegation is currently making plans to share the experience of Congress IX with the larger Catholic community and to encourage involvement in the execution of the agreed upon Action Plan of Congress.

**Date & Location**

This plan starts with a Day of Reflection on November 9<sup>th</sup> at St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church in Hapeville.

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