

catholic black history month

Catholic Black History Month: Celebrating Faith, Heritage, and Resilience

catholic black history month is a powerful observance that shines a light on the rich contributions of Black Catholics throughout history. This month-long celebration is not only about remembering the past but also about honoring the enduring faith, culture, and resilience of Black Catholics within the broader Catholic Church. It offers a unique opportunity to explore how faith and heritage intertwine, shaping the lives of many individuals and communities worldwide.

Understanding Catholic Black History Month helps us appreciate the diverse tapestry of Catholicism and recognize the spiritual and societal impact of Black Catholics, from saints and clergy to laypersons who have shaped their communities and the Church itself.

The Origins and Significance of Catholic Black History Month

Catholic Black History Month is observed primarily in the United States during the month of November. While Black History Month at large is celebrated in February, November holds special significance for Catholic Black History Month because it includes the feast day of St. Martin de Porres (November 3), the first Black saint from the Americas. This timing allows for a focused reflection on Black Catholics' history, spirituality, and cultural legacy.

Unlike general Black History Month, which highlights achievements across various fields, Catholic Black History Month zeros in on the intersection of faith and Black identity. It highlights how Black Catholics have contributed to the Church's mission, advocated for social justice, and maintained rich cultural traditions within their faith communities.

Why November?

The choice of November is meaningful beyond St. Martin de Porres' feast day. It also coincides with the National Black Catholic Congress, an organization dedicated to addressing the needs and concerns of Black Catholics in the U.S. The month encourages parishes and dioceses to engage in education, prayer, and community-building events that deepen awareness and foster inclusivity.

Historical Figures and Saints in Catholic Black History Month

One of the most inspiring ways to engage with Catholic Black History Month is by learning about the remarkable individuals who have shaped the Church's history. Their stories reflect courage, faith, and perseverance amid challenges such as racial discrimination and social marginalization.

Saints and Servants of God

- **St. Martin de Porres**: Born in Peru in the 16th century, he was the son of a Spanish nobleman and a freed African slave. Known for his humility and miraculous healings, he became a model of charity and interracial harmony.
- **St. Josephine Bakhita**: Originally from Sudan, she was kidnapped and enslaved before eventually finding freedom and becoming a Canossian sister. Her story is a testament to forgiveness and faith.
- **Venerable Pierre Toussaint**: A former slave from Haiti who became a prominent philanthropist and hairdresser in New York City, Toussaint is on the path to sainthood and is remembered for his charitable works.

These saints and others provide powerful role models for Black Catholics and the wider Church community, illustrating how faith can overcome adversity.

Black Catholic Leaders and Activists

Beyond saints, Catholic Black History Month also honors influential leaders who have advocated for civil rights and social justice within and beyond the Church. Figures like Father Augustus Tolton, the first openly recognized Black Catholic priest in the U.S., and Sister Thea Bowman, a charismatic evangelist and educator, made significant strides in promoting racial equality and enriching Catholic education.

The Role of Black Catholic Culture and Worship

Catholic Black History Month is also a time to celebrate the unique cultural expressions of Black Catholics. The blending of African, Caribbean, and African American traditions with Catholic liturgy creates vibrant worship experiences that resonate deeply with communities.

Music and Liturgy

Gospel music, spirituals, and rhythmic hymns are an integral part of many Black Catholic parishes. These musical forms not only enhance worship but also connect congregants to a heritage of struggle and hope. During Catholic Black History Month, many churches incorporate special liturgies featuring Gospel choirs and culturally significant readings.

Community and Fellowship

The sense of community is strong in Black Catholic congregations, where fellowship extends beyond Sunday services. Events like communal meals, educational workshops, and prayer groups help foster a supportive environment that nurtures both faith and cultural identity.

How Parishes and Individuals Can Celebrate Catholic Black History Month

Observing Catholic Black History Month offers a chance to deepen understanding, promote inclusivity, and honor the contributions of Black Catholics. Here are some meaningful ways parishes, schools, and individuals can participate:

- **Educational Programs:** Host talks or workshops on Black Catholic history, highlighting notable figures and their impact on the Church and society.
- **Special Liturgies:** Incorporate Gospel music and readings that reflect Black Catholic spirituality into Masses throughout November.
- **Community Service:** Organize outreach projects that embody the spirit of service exemplified by Black Catholic saints and leaders.
- **Reading and Reflection:** Encourage reading biographies, spiritual writings, or historical accounts related to Black Catholics.
- **Art and Exhibits:** Display artwork, photographs, or artifacts that celebrate Black Catholic heritage within church spaces.

These activities not only celebrate history but also foster a sense of belonging and encourage dialogue about racial justice and faith.

The Impact of Catholic Black History Month on the Wider Church

By highlighting the stories and contributions of Black Catholics, Catholic Black History Month challenges the Church to confront its own history with race and inclusivity. It prompts reflection on the disparities faced by Black Catholics and inspires efforts to build a more welcoming and equitable Church community.

This observance also enriches the spiritual life of the Church by showcasing diverse expressions of faith and devotion. It reminds all Catholics that the Church is universal, encompassing a multitude of cultures and experiences that each bring unique gifts to the Body of Christ.

Encouraging Vocations and Leadership

One lasting effect of Catholic Black History Month is its role in encouraging vocations among Black youth. By sharing stories of Black saints, priests, and religious figures, the Church cultivates a sense of possibility and pride. This encouragement is crucial for nurturing future leaders who can continue advocating for justice and representation within the Church.

Building Bridges of Understanding

Celebrating Catholic Black History Month also promotes intercultural dialogue and mutual respect among different ethnic groups within the Church. It serves as a reminder that embracing diversity strengthens the community and reflects the inclusive love at the heart of the Gospel.

In this way, Catholic Black History Month is more than a remembrance; it is a living celebration that invites all Catholics to grow in faith, awareness, and solidarity.

As November unfolds each year, parishes and faithful around the world find inspiration in the stories of Black Catholics who have shaped history through their witness. Their faith, resilience, and contributions continue to inspire new generations, making Catholic Black History Month a vital and enriching observance for the entire Church community.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Catholic Black History Month and when is it observed?

Catholic Black History Month is a time dedicated to recognizing and celebrating the contributions, faith, and cultural heritage of Black Catholics. It is typically observed during the month of November in the United States.

Why is Black History Month important within the Catholic Church?

Black History Month is important within the Catholic Church because it acknowledges the significant role Black Catholics have played in the Church's history, honors their spiritual and cultural contributions, and promotes greater awareness and inclusion.

Who are some notable Black Catholic figures celebrated during Catholic Black History Month?

Notable Black Catholic figures include St. Martin de Porres, the first Black saint from the Americas; Venerable Augustus Tolton, the first openly recognized Black American priest; and Sister Thea Bowman, a prominent Black Catholic educator and advocate.

How do Catholic parishes typically observe Black History Month?

Catholic parishes observe Black History Month through special Masses, educational programs, guest speakers, cultural events, and by highlighting the stories and contributions of Black Catholics in homilies and parish bulletins.

What role does the National Black Catholic Congress play in Black History Month?

The National Black Catholic Congress promotes awareness, education, and celebration of Black Catholic heritage during Black History Month by organizing events, providing resources, and advocating for the spiritual and social needs of Black Catholics.

How can individuals participate in Catholic Black History Month?

Individuals can participate by attending special Masses and events, learning about Black Catholic saints and leaders, supporting Black Catholic ministries, sharing educational materials, and fostering inclusive environments within their parishes.

Additional Resources

Catholic Black History Month: Exploring the Intersection of Faith and Heritage

catholic black history month represents a vital opportunity to recognize and celebrate the rich contributions of Black Catholics throughout history. While Black History Month broadly honors the achievements and struggles of African Americans across various sectors, Catholic Black History Month specifically highlights the spiritual, cultural, and social impact of Black individuals within the Catholic Church. This observance serves not only as a reflection on past challenges and triumphs but also as an invitation to engage with ongoing dialogues about race, faith, and identity in contemporary Catholic communities.

The Origins and Significance of Catholic Black History Month

The broader celebration of Black History Month was established in 1926 by historian Carter G. Woodson to promote the achievements of African Americans in the face of widespread marginalization. However, within religious contexts, particularly the Catholic Church, the need to spotlight Black Catholics' unique narratives has led to the development of Catholic Black History Month observances, often aligned with or overlapping February's national Black History Month.

This specific recognition is critical because the experiences of Black Catholics have historically been distinct from those of other African American communities due to the church's role in shaping cultural identity, social advocacy, and spiritual life. Catholic Black History Month provides a platform to examine the intersectionality of race and religion, underscoring contributions that range from early African Catholic saints to contemporary leaders advocating for justice and inclusion.

The Historical Context of Black Catholics in America

From the earliest days of European colonization, Black individuals have been part of the Catholic Church's story in America. Enslaved Africans and free Black people often found solace and community within Catholic parishes, even as they faced systemic discrimination both inside and outside the church. The establishment of Black Catholic congregations and religious orders, such as the Sisters of the Holy Family founded in New Orleans in 1842, exemplifies resilience and faith amidst adversity.

The history of Black Catholicism includes notable figures like Venerable Pierre Toussaint, a Haitian-born former slave who became a philanthropist and layman in New York City during the 19th century. His cause for sainthood has drawn attention to the significant yet underrecognized Black Catholic heritage. Similarly, Archbishop James Augustine Healy, the first African-American Catholic bishop in the United States, serves as an emblem of early Black leadership within the church.

Contemporary Impact and Challenges

In modern times, Catholic Black History Month serves as a reminder of both progress and ongoing challenges within the Catholic Church regarding racial equity and inclusion. Black Catholics today navigate a dual identity that encompasses both their cultural heritage and their faith traditions. This duality enriches the broader church community but also highlights persistent issues such as underrepresentation in leadership roles and lingering racial prejudices.

The National Black Catholic Congress (NBCC), established in 1987, exemplifies organized efforts to empower Black Catholics and advocate for their needs within the church. Through educational programs, liturgical celebrations, and social justice initiatives, the NBCC and similar organizations seek to amplify Black Catholic voices and foster a more inclusive church environment.

Educational and Liturgical Observances

During Catholic Black History Month, many dioceses and parishes across the United States incorporate special educational programs and liturgical celebrations that emphasize Black Catholic heritage. These observances often include:

- Homilies and sermons focused on Black Catholic saints and historical figures
- Workshops and lectures addressing the intersection of race and faith
- Music and art inspired by African and African American Catholic traditions
- Community service projects aimed at social justice and racial reconciliation

Such activities not only raise awareness but also foster a sense of belonging among Black Catholics and encourage dialogue on how the church can continue to evolve in its understanding of racial justice.

Broader Cultural and Social Implications

Catholic Black History Month is more than a religious observance; it is part of a larger cultural movement that intersects with civil rights, social justice, and identity politics. The acknowledgment of Black Catholic history challenges the often Eurocentric narrative of Catholicism, revealing a more diverse and complex tapestry of faith experiences.

Furthermore, highlighting Black Catholic contributions challenges stereotypes and provides role models for younger generations. It also encourages the church at large to confront systemic racism and work toward inclusivity, reflecting the universal nature of Catholic teaching.

Pros and Cons of Observing Catholic Black History Month

While the observance is largely seen as positive, it is worth considering its advantages and potential challenges:

1. Pros:

- Elevates often overlooked contributions of Black Catholics
- Promotes greater racial awareness and inclusivity within the church
- Provides educational opportunities that enrich faith communities
- Encourages dialogue on social justice and reconciliation

2. Cons:

- Risk of tokenism if observance is superficial or limited to a single month
- Potential resistance within some church communities uncomfortable with discussions on race
- Challenges in balancing diverse cultural expressions within a unified church identity

Ultimately, the effectiveness of Catholic Black History Month depends on the sincerity and depth of engagement from church leadership and laity alike.

Looking Forward: The Future of Catholic Black History Month

As the Catholic Church continues to grapple with issues of racial justice, Catholic Black History Month stands as a critical moment for reflection and action. With increasing awareness of the need for inclusivity, many dioceses are expanding their celebrations beyond February, incorporating Black Catholic history into wider church curricula and community life year-round.

The integration of technology and social media has also broadened the reach of Catholic Black History Month, allowing for virtual events, online resources, and global conversations. This digital expansion facilitates greater access to historical materials and contemporary voices, fostering a dynamic and evolving appreciation of Black Catholic identity.

In this context, Catholic Black History Month not only honors the past but actively shapes the future of the church's mission to embrace all people and promote justice. It is a reminder that faith and heritage are inextricably linked, and that the richness of Catholicism is enriched by the diversity of its members.

Catholic Black History Month

catholic black history month: Black and Catholic Tia Noelle Pratt, 2025-09-01 Black and Catholic documents the exclusion, erasure, and systematic racism faced by Black Catholics, filling an essential gap in both Catholic and Black history. In the storied history of the U.S. Catholic community, there is a long-standing myth held by Catholics and non-Catholics alike that there are no Black Catholics. In this deeply researched and compelling book, Tia Noelle Pratt debunks this myth and brings forward the religious experiences and culture of Black Catholics, filling a void in the literature of both U.S. Catholicism and African American religion. She identifies the nature and ramifications of systemic racism on American Catholicism and how that marginalization impacts Black Catholic identity. Building on her extensive research, Pratt amplifies the voices and experiences of Black Catholics through original interviews and by sharing the story of St. Peter Claver, Philadelphia's first Black Catholic church. Black and Catholic also explores the ways that liturgy and music can build community, celebrate individuality, and resist racism. Black and Catholic is an essential book that centralizes the Black Catholic community, revealing the heartache of racism and discrimination, the comfort drawn from the strength of generations of believers, and the celebration from combining the music and traditions of African American religious experiences with the belief and rituals of Roman Catholicism.

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catholic black history month: *Sourcebook for Sundays, Seasons, and Weekdays* 2026 Ansel Augustine, Lauren Warner, Jan Wood, 2025-03-01 Those who prepare the liturgy are entrusted with a very important task—helping our assemblies encounter the real presence of Christ and be

transformed and strengthened for discipleship. Life-giving celebrations of the liturgy help foster and nourish the faith of our parishioners. Sourcebook for Sundays, Seasons, and Weekdays is a trusted annual publication providing insightful, concise, and detailed suggestions for preparing the Mass each day of the liturgical year. With its focus on celebrating the liturgy well, this resource will guide parish teams in making “the liturgical prayers of the Christian community more alive” (On Sacred Music, 31). This helpful and practical resource includes: -Preaching points -Additional Scripture insights for the Proper of Saints -Music preparation guidance and song suggestions -Ways to connect the liturgy to the Christian life -Original Mass texts for Sundays, solemnities, and feasts of the Lord -Seasonal worship committee agendas -Ideas for celebrating other rites and customs -An online supplement for preparing the sacramental rites -Seasonal introductions -Daily calendar preparation guides -Dated entries with liturgical titles, lectionary citations, and vestment colors -Scripture insights -Brief biographies of the saints and blessed -Guidance for choosing among the options provided in the ritual texts

catholic black history month: *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church* Bryan N. Massingale, 2014-07-30 Examines the history of racism in the United States from the Civil War to the twenty-first century and discusses the teaching efforts of the Catholic Church to put a stop to racism and promote reconciliation and justice.

catholic black history month: *Let It Shine!* Mary E. McGann, R.S.C.J., 2009-08-25 *Let It Shine!* probes the distinctive contribution of black Catholics to the life of the American church, and to the unfolding of lived Christianity in the United States. This important book explores the powerful spiritual renaissance that has marked African American life and selfunderstanding over the last several decades by examining one critical dimension: the forging of new expressions of Catholic worship rooted in the larger Catholic tradition, yet shaped in unique ways by African American religious culture. Starting with the 1960s, the book traces the dynamic interplay of social change, cultural awakening, and charismatic leadership that have sparked the emergence of distinctive styles of black Catholic worship. In their historical overview, McGann and Eva Marie Lumas chronicle the liturgical and pastoral issues of a black Catholic liturgical movement that has transformed the larger American church. McGann then examines the foundational vision of Rev. Clarence R. J. Rivers, who promoted forms of black worship, music, preaching, and prayer that have enabled African American Catholics to reclaim the fullness of their religious identity. Finally, Harbor constructs a black Catholic aesthetic based on the theological, ethical, and liturgical insights of four African American scholars, expressed through twenty-three performative values. This liturgical aesthetic illuminates the distinctive gift of black Catholics to the multicultural tapestry of lived faith in the American church and can also serve as a pastoral model for other cultural communities. Blending history, theology, and liturgy, *Let It Shine!* is a valuable resource for scholars, teachers, and students and a practical pastoral guide to bringing African American spirituality more firmly into the sacramental life of American parishes.

catholic black history month: *American Parishes* Gary J. Adler, Tricia C. Bruce, Brian Starks, 2019-07-02 Parishes are the missing middle in studies of American Catholicism. Between individual Catholics and a global institution, the thousands of local parishes are where Catholicism gets remade. *American Parishes* showcases what social forces shape parishes, what parishes do, how they do it, and what this says about the future of Catholicism in the United States. Expounding an embedded field approach, this book displays the numerous forces currently reshaping American parishes. It draws from sociology of religion, culture, organizations, and race to illuminate basic parish processes, like leadership and education, and ongoing parish struggles like conflict and multiculturalism. *American Parishes* brings together contemporary data, methods, and questions to establish a sociological re-engagement with Catholic parishes and a Catholic re-engagement with sociological analysis. Contributions by leading social scientists highlight how community, geography, and authority intersect within parishes. It illuminates and analyzes how growing racial diversity, an aging religious population, and neighborhood change affect the inner workings of parishes. Contributors: Gary J. Adler Jr., Nancy Ammerman, Mary Jo Bane, Tricia C. Bruce, John A. Coleman,

S.J., Kathleen Garces-Foley, Mary Gray, Brett Hoover, Courtney Ann Irby, Tia Noelle Pratt, and Brian Starks

catholic black history month: Air Force Chaplains United States. Air Force. Office of the Chief of Chaplains, Daniel B. Jorgensen, 1991

catholic black history month: Mestizo Democracy John Francis Burke, 2003-11-03 It can come as no surprise that the ethnic makeup of the American population is rapidly changing. That there are political repercussions from these changes is also self-evident. How the changes can, must, and should alter our very understanding of democracy, though, may not be obvious. Political theorist John Burke addresses these issues by offering a “mestizo” theory of democracy and tracing its implications for public policy. The challenge before the United States in the coming century, Burke posits, will be to articulate a politics that neither renders cultures utterly autonomous from each other nor culminates in their homogeneous assimilation. Fortuitously or ironically, the way to do this comes from the very culture that is now necessitating the change. Mestizo is a term from the Mexican socio-political experience. It means “mixture” and implies a particular kind of mixture that has resulted in a blend of indigenous, African, and Spanish genes and cultures in Latin America. This mixture is not a “melting pot” experience, where all eventually become assimilated; rather, it is a mixture in which the influences of the different cultures remain identifiable but not static. They all evolve through interaction with the others, and the resulting larger culture also evolves as the parts do. Mestizaje (the collective noun form) is thus process more than condition. John Burke analyzes both American democratic theory and multiculturalism within political theology to develop a model for cultivating a democratic political community that can deal constructively with its cultural diversity. He applies this new model to a number of important policy issues: official language(s), voting and participation, equal employment opportunity, housing, and free trade. He then presents an intensive case study, based on a parish “multicultural committee” and choir in which he has been a participant, to show how the “engaged dialogue” of mestizaje might work and what pitfalls await it. Burke concludes that in the United States we are becoming mestizo whether we know it or not and whether we like it or not. By embracing the communitarian but non-assimilationist stance of intentional mestizaje, we can forge a future together that will be not only greater than the sum of its parts but also freer and more just than its past.

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catholic black history month: Crossing Parish Boundaries Timothy B. Neary, 2016-10-14 Controversy erupted in spring 2001 when Chicago’s mostly white Southside Catholic Conference youth sports league rejected the application of the predominantly black St. Sabina grade school. Fifty years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, interracialism seemed stubbornly unattainable, and the national spotlight once again turned to the history of racial conflict in Catholic parishes. It’s widely understood that midcentury, working class, white ethnic Catholics were among the most virulent racists, but, as *Crossing Parish Boundaries* shows, that’s not the whole story. In this book, Timothy B. Neary reveals the history of Bishop Bernard Sheil’s Catholic Youth Organization (CYO), which brought together thousands of young people of all races and religions from Chicago’s racially segregated neighborhoods to take part in sports and educational programming. Tens of thousands of boys and girls participated in basketball, track and field, and the most popular sport of all, boxing, which regularly filled Chicago Stadium with roaring crowds. The history of Bishop Sheil and the CYO shows a cosmopolitan version of American Catholicism, one that is usually overshadowed by accounts of white ethnic Catholics aggressively resisting the racial integration of their working-class neighborhoods. By telling the story of Catholic-sponsored interracial cooperation within Chicago, *Crossing Parish Boundaries* complicates our understanding of northern urban race relations in the mid-twentieth century.

catholic black history month: *Desegregating Dixie* Mark Newman, 2018-10-04 Winner of the 2020 American Studies Network Book Prize from the European Association for American Studies

Mark Newman draws on a vast range of archives and many interviews to uncover for the first time the complex response of African American and white Catholics across the South to desegregation. In the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, the southern Catholic Church contributed to segregation by confining African Americans to the back of white churches and to black-only schools and churches. However, in the twentieth century, papal adoption and dissemination of the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, pressure from some black and white Catholics, and secular change brought by the civil rights movement increasingly led the Church to address racial discrimination both inside and outside its walls. Far from monolithic, white Catholics in the South split between a moderate segregationist majority and minorities of hard-line segregationists and progressive racial egalitarians. While some bishops felt no discomfort with segregation, prelates appointed from the late 1940s onward tended to be more supportive of religious and secular change. Some bishops in the peripheral South began desegregation before or in anticipation of secular change while elsewhere, especially in the Deep South, they often tied changes in the Catholic churches to secular desegregation. African American Catholics were diverse and more active in the civil rights movement than has often been assumed. While some black Catholics challenged racism in the Church, many were conflicted about the manner of Catholic desegregation generally imposed by closing valued black institutions. Tracing its impact through the early 1990s, Newman reveals how desegregation shook congregations but seldom brought about genuine integration.

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catholic black history month: Encyclopedia of African American Society Gerald D. Jaynes, 2005-02-01 Do your students or patrons ever ask you about African Americans in sports? How about African American Academy Award winners? Or perhaps you're asked about more complex social issues regarding the unemployment rate among African Americans, or the number of African American men on death row? If these questions sound familiar, the Encyclopedia of African American Society is a must-have for your library. This two-volume reference seeks to capture the ways in which the tenets and foundations of African American culture have given rise to today's society. Approaching the field from a street level perspective, these two volumes cover topics of universal interest in America: rap music, sports, television, cinema, racism, religion, literature, and much more. The Encyclopedia of African American Society is also the first comprehensive yet accessible reference set in this field to give voice to the turbulent historical trends—slavery, segregation, separate but equal—that are often ignored in favor of mere facts. This is a definitive, reliable, and accessible entry point to learning the basics about African American society. The encyclopedia is anchored by alphabetically arranged essays on such topics as abolitionism, affirmative action, and the civil rights movement. More than just a who's who, these volumes

emphasize social issues and events—those filled with significance and consequence through history. Civil Rights, economic growth, law and justice, and politics—with all of their numerous subcategories—receive substantial coverage. The encyclopedia naturally contains hundreds of articles on notable African Americans (Martin Luther King, Jr., Jackie Robinson, Miles Davis), groundbreaking events (Emancipation Proclamation, Los Angeles Riots), sports and culture (Rap Music, Jazz), and significant heritage sites (Apollo Theater). This much needed two-volume encyclopedia should become a staple in collections at school, public, and academic libraries. Readers of all ages, backgrounds, and ethnic or racial groups will find fascinating material on every page.

Key Features Nearly 700 signed articles Almost 50 photographs Complete list of African Americans in sports Halls of Fame Cross-referenced for easy links from one topic to another Reader's guide facilitates easy browsing for relevant articles Clear, accessible writing style appropriate for high school and college students and interested lay readers Comprehensive index and bibliography Topics Covered Concepts and Theories Fine Arts, Theater, and Entertainment Health and Education History and Heritage Literature Media Movements and Events Music and Dance Organizations and Institutions Places Politics and Policy Popular Culture Religion and Beliefs The Road to Freedom Science, Technology, and Business Social Issues Special Populations Sports Advisory Board Sherri L. Barnes, Davidson Library, University of California, Santa Barbara W. Maurice Shipley, Ph.D., Ohio State University William H. Wiggins, Jr., Ph.D., Indiana University

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catholic black history month: Fugitive Saints Katie Walker Grimes, 2017-04-01 How should the Catholic church remember the sins of its saints? This question proves particularly urgent in the case of those saints who were canonized due to their relation to black slavery. Today, many of their racial virtues seem like racial vices. In this way, the church celebrates Peter Claver, a seventeenth-century Spanish missionary to Colombia, as "the saint of the slave trade," and extols Martín de Porres as the patron saint of mixed race people. But in truth, their sainthoods have upheld anti-blackness much more than they have undermined it. Habituated by anti-blackness, the church has struggled to perceive racial holiness accurately. In the ongoing cause to canonize Pierre Toussaint, a Haitian-born former slave, the church continues to enact these bad racial habits. This book proposes black fugitivity, as both a historical practice and an interpretive principle, to be a strategy by which the church can build new hagiographical habits. Rather than searching inside itself for racial heroes, the church should learn to celebrate those black fugitives who sought refuge outside of it.

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