

## WALKING WITH THE SAINTS



*Mother Henriette Delille*



*Mother Mary Lange*



*Father Augustus Tolton*



*Pierre Toussaint*



*Julia Greeley*



*Sister Thea Bowman*

He said to me, “These are the people who have come safely through the terrible persecution. They have washed their robes and made them white with the blood of the Lamb. That is why they stand before God’s throne and serve Him day and night in His temple.” (Revelations 7:14-16)

We are blessed and grateful that today there are six black American Catholic candidates for sainthood: three religious sisters, two lay persons and a priest, representing a diverse cross section of the faithful. For all American Catholics, they are models of holiness and service.

Venerable Mother Henriette Delille (1812-1862) a free woman of color born in New Orleans founded the Sisters of the Holy Family in 1842. The congregation ministered to slaves, at a time when educating slaves was illegal. Mother Delille was the first U.S.-born African American formally postulated for canonization.

Servant of God Mother Mary Lange (c1787-1882) co-founded the Oblate Sisters of Providence in Baltimore in 1829. Dedicated to the care and education of black children, the Oblates Sisters of Providence is the first successful religious community for women of African descent.

Servant of God Father Augustus Tolton (1854-1897) was born into slavery in Missouri. Ordained in Rome in 1886, Tolton was the first recognized-Black American priest. Pastor of St. Monica in Chicago, Tolton became the spiritual leader of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century National Black Catholic Congress movement.

Venerable Pierre Toussaint (1766-1853). Born into slavery in Haiti, Toussaint became a freeman, successful businessman, and philanthropist in New York City. He is the only lay person honored, alongside cardinal-archbishops, with burial in the crypt of St. Patrick.

Servant of God Julia Greeley, Denver’s Angel of Charity, was born into slavery in Hannibal, Missouri sometime between 1833 and 1848. Julia entered the Catholic Church at Sacred Heart Parish 1880. Every month she visited on foot every fire station in Denver and delivered literature of the Sacred Heart League to the firemen, Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

Servant of God Sister Thea Bowman (1937-1990), a convert at age nine, received her doctorate from the Catholic University of America. She gave presentation around the country aimed at bridging racial and cultural division. She continued her fight against the evils that drive people apart from her wheel chair after being diagnosis with bone cancer. She prayed “to live until I die, to live fully”.

We are proud of these fore-bearers, but we also *need* them. We need their intercession, as men and women who know what it means “to shoulder the responsibilities of being both Black and Catholic.” We need their example.

Let us pray: