

Celebrating Black History Month - February 2026

Share, Learn, and Celebrate

The *Share, Learn, and Celebrate* initiative is designed to acknowledge, educate, and embed multicultural awareness in our diverse communities. Through *Share, Learn, and Celebrate* we hope to heighten awareness, knowledge and understanding through the engagement of Archdiocesan parishes, ministries and the faithful in relevant activities. Participants will be encouraged to share the achievements, identity, beauty, richness, and importance of each of our cultural communities as part of celebratory and historically significant occasions. Please see the following recommendations for consideration to *Share, Learn, and Celebrate* Black History Month.

Black History Month

Black History Month is an annual celebration which commemorates Black Americans' achievements, honors their contributions to the United States and the world, and recognizes their crucial role in U.S. history. In 1926, this celebration was created by Harvard-trained historian Carter G. Woodson and was initially called Negro History Week. During the nation's bicentennial in 1976, President Gerald R. Ford extended the celebration to a month.

2026 Black History Month Theme - "A Century of Black History Commemorations"

Each year a theme is selected by the Association for the Study of African American Life and History to bring to the public's attention to important accomplishments and developments that merit emphasis. This year's theme, *A Century of Black History Commemorations*, emphasizes the significant achievement represented by a century of dedicated Black history commemorations. The theme honors how Carter G. Woodson's concept of "Negro History Week" has evolved to become an annual, month-long, scholarly and sustained movement to study, teach, and disseminate Black history.

Archdiocesan Level Activities and Resources

Share Storytelling is a great way to share history and build relationships in parish communities. Invite knowledgeable Black History storytellers, scholars, ministers and witnesses to share about our past, speak to our present, and help shape our future to speak at a parish gathering or event. Black History Month is a special time to amplify voices that foster belonging, justice, spiritual growth and an appreciation of Black identity within the wider Church.

Learn *A Place at the Table: "African Americans on the Path to Sainthood"*
Parishes and ministries are invited to host a screening of the documentary film, *A Place at the Table*, which tells the story of the lives of our church's first six Black Americans to be considered for sainthood and the efforts to canonize them. Learn more about these outstanding men and women and hear of their lives of faith. We

can make a difference by sharing their stories, contributions, and impact on the lives of so many. The Archdiocese of Washington has obtained permission to show the film. We encourage parishes to host a screening event and engage your parish, school, and community. Please contact culturaldiversity@adw.org to request additional information and to schedule a date for a screening.

Celebrate Mark your calendar and plan to attend The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington's commemoration of Black History Month which will be held at the St. Joseph Catholic Church (2020 St. Josephs Drive, Upper Marlboro, MD) on Saturday, February 21, 2026: Praise and Worship will begin at 4:30 p.m. and Mass will follow at 5:00 p.m. with Auxiliary Bishop of Washington Roy E. Campbell Jr. serving as Principal Celebrant. Visit [Upcoming Events - Archdiocese of Washington](#) in January 2026 for additional details.

Parish Level Recommendations

Share Please share the stories of seven African Americans who are currently on the road to sainthood. Share information about these historically significant African Americans and encourage members of your parish community to support their cause for canonization.

1. Servant of God Martin de Porres Ward, OFM (March 20, 1918 – June 22, 1999)

Servant of God de Porres Ward was an African American Catholic priest and Franciscan friar who served as a missionary in Brazil for more than 40 years. He was a product of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington and the first African American to join the Conventual Friars Minor.

<https://www.olaprovince.org/locations/the-cause-for-fr-martin-de-porres-maria-ward-ofm-conv-2/>

2. Venerable Father Augustus Tolton (April 1, 1854 – July 9, 1897)

Venerable Tolton was the first Roman Catholic priest in the United States publicly known to be Black when he was ordained in 1886. See, [Tolton Ambassador - Augustus Tolton \(archchicago.org\)](#)

3. Servant of God Julia Greeley (1833-1848 – June 7, 1918)

Servant of God Julia Greeley was born into slavery, at Hannibal, Missouri, sometime between 1833 and 1848. Freed by Missouri's Emancipation Act in 1865, she joined the Secular Franciscan Order in 1901 and was active in it until her death in 1918. See, [Julia Greeley Home website.](#)

4. Servant of God Sister Thea Bowman, FSPA (Dec. 29, 1937 – March 30, 1990)

Servant Sister Thea Bowman was born in 1937 and reared in Canton, Mississippi. As a child, she converted to Catholicism. She joined the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. See, [Sister Thea Bowman | Cause for Canonization](#)

5. Venerable Pierre Toussaint (June 27, 1766 – June 20, 1853)

Venerable Pierre Toussaint was born into slavery in Haiti. He became a freeman, successful businessman and philanthropist in New York City. See, [Venerable Pierre Toussaint - Archdiocese of New York](#)

6. Venerable Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange (1784 – Feb. 3, 1882)

Venerable Mother Lange was the foundress and first Superior General of the Oblate Sisters of Providence See, [HOME \(motherlange.org\)](#).

7. Venerable Henriette Delille (March 11, 1813 – Nov. 17, 1862)

Venerable Henriette Delille was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, where she lived all her life. In 1842, she founded the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family. See, [HOME \(henriettedelille.com\)](#)

Learn

Share the story of Father Augustus Tolton by inviting a Tolton Ambassador to your parish to give a talk about his life. Contact: Co-Convenors Cheryl Holley, and Anita Coleman at (202) 491-5779, toltonambassadors.dc@gmail.com; Instagram: [@ToltonAmbsDC](#) Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/toltonambassadorsdc>

Celebrate

Historical facts about Black history are available to be shared in school newsletters, daily announcements, and social media. Please contact the Office of Cultural Diversity and Outreach at culturaldiversity@adw.org for a listing of historical facts.

Share

Share this year's theme, *A Century of Black History Commemorations*, by hosting gatherings and talks about the century of commemorations. Learn more by visiting the Association for the Study of African American Life and History <https://asalh.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/2026-Black-History-Theme-Executive-Summary.pdf>.

Celebrate

A variety of resources have been curated to support parishes and schools in the celebration of Black History Month. The Office of Cultural Diversity and Outreach is at your service to assist with the resources described in this document. Please contact culturaldiversity@adw.org for more information.

Share Black History Month is a great time to make an intentional effort to broaden our churches' reach and understanding. Celebrations can include performances, singing, watching films, and having discussions. These events can help everyone learn more about Black history and culture and promote understanding and reconciliation.

Activities to consider:

- Invite a priest, deacon, or choir from a parish of different ethnicity than the prominent ethnicity in your parish. Share the diverse culture of liturgical expression.
- Sing hymns or songs by composers from the African diaspora.
- Include the history of the song in the church bulletin or website.
- Have a potluck with food from members' ancestral homelands.
- Invite members to wear clothing from their ancestral country.
- Attend or co-host a Black history event in your community.

Learn Black Catholics have a rich history and dedication to social action. Learn this history by hosting a parish book discussion during the month of February. Please contact the Office of Cultural Diversity and Outreach at culturaldiversity@adw.org for book and dialogue recommendations.

Celebrate Plan a special liturgy at your parish to celebrate the vibrant cultural expression of Black Americans in the Church and our country. Celebrate the diversity of your congregation. Engage your parish's intercultural committee or others to plan and participate. Please contact the Office of Cultural Diversity and Outreach at culturaldiversity@adw.org for assistance with liturgical resources such as prayer cards and Prayers for the Faithful.

Share Black Catholics have a rich music tradition. Share the gift of music by inviting musicians from the diaspora to perform music from their cultural traditions during the Mass or consider having your own parishes' music ministries perform representative selections from the diaspora. See, *Lead Me, Guide Me: The African American Catholic Hymnal*.

Learn Acknowledge the service of Black Religious or orders that serve Black Catholics by hosting a virtual panel discussion or meeting with members of the Josephites, Oblate Sisters of Providence, and/or Sisters of the Holy Family. Please contact the Office of Cultural Diversity and Outreach at culturaldiversity@adw.org for more information.

Celebrate The National Day of Prayer for the African American Family <https://www.usccb.org/committees/african-american-affairs/national-day-prayer-african-american-family> was founded by Father James Good in 1989. Resources to support parish-level celebrations are provided by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishop and can be found at [usccb.org](https://www.usccb.org).

Share Invite parishioners to tell their story of being a Black Catholic through their family history or personal journey. This is an opportunity to learn about one another and how Catholicism has shaped their lives. These open dialogues can help build community in the parish.

Learn Consider sponsoring a parish outing or encourage families in the parish to visit the following historical sites within the Archdiocese of Washington:

1. African American History in St. Mary's County MD begins in 1634. Explore African American Heritage sites: <https://www.visitstmarysmd.com/explore/museums-history/african-american/>
2. Southern Maryland African American history of Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's County: [Southern Maryland African American Heritage Guide](#)
3. Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, is located at 1411 W Street, SE Washington, D.C. The site preserves the home and estate of Frederick Douglass, one of the most prominent African Americans of the 19th century. <https://www.nps.gov/frdo/index.htm>
4. Mary McLeod Bethune Council House, <https://www.nps.gov/mamc/index.htm>.
5. Anacostia Community Museum, <https://anacostia.si.edu/>.
6. African American Civil War Memorial, <https://www.afroamcivilwar.org/>.
7. Underground Railroad Experience Trail, <https://montgomeryparks.org/parks-and-trails/woodlawn-manor-cultural-park/underground-railroad-experience-trail/>.
8. Holy Family Catholic Church was established as a Jesuit mission for Black tenant farmers in 1890 and designated as a historic landmark in 1984. <https://holyfamilywoodmore.org/>
9. Riversdale Mansion, <https://www.riversdale.org/the-plummer-family>.
10. Prince George's African American Museum and Cultural Center, <https://pgaamcc.org/>.
11. Commemorative to Enslaved People of Southern Maryland, St. Mary's College <https://www.smcm.edu/commemorative/>. For more sites in Southern Maryland please go to: <https://books.alchemidesign.com/books/nqcd/#p=1>.
12. Josiah Henson Museum & Park <https://montgomeryparks.org/parks-and-trails/josiah-henson-museum-and-park/>
13. The Sandy Spring Slave Museum and African Art Gallery <https://www.sandyspringslavemuseum.org/>

Catholic Schools and Religious Education

- Share** Share relevant lesson plans, projects, and activities that you have planned for your school/students with other schools and teachers by emailing resources and recommendations to culturaldiversity@adw.org. The OCDO will compile all resources that are received and share with our schools through the Catholic Schools Office Friday Update.
- Learn** Help students learn more about Black saints with a fun and affordable art project by having them create “miraculous medals” with the images of Black saints. All you will need is construction paper, yarn, and the saints’ images. Email culturaldiversity@adw.org for details and instructions.
- For Teachers: PBS is celebrating Black History Month 2026! Annually PBS offers a special collection is curated to showcase Black excellence through contributions, achievements, and ideas across core subjects and eras. Please check out pbs.org for more information after January 1, 2026 or contact culturaldiversity@adw.org for assistance.
- These classroom resources aim to inspire educators to intentionally include Black history and culture stories in all curricula, using PBS Learning Media as a tool to celebrate Black history this month and all year long.
- Literature & Media The Arts Civics & Society STEM**
- Celebrate** Have a special school Mass celebrating Black History Month. Engage the parish, faculty, staff, students, and parents to plan and participate in the liturgy. Please contact the Office of Cultural Diversity and Outreach at culturaldiversity@adw.org for assistance with liturgical resources.
- Share** Historical facts about Black history are available to be shared in school newsletters, daily announcements, and social media. Please contact the Office of Cultural Diversity and Outreach at culturaldiversity@adw.org for a listing of historical facts.
- Learn** Plan class field trips and outings to special destinations located in the Archdiocese of Washington – please see the destinations listed previously in this document.
- Celebrate** Plan a school art festival gathering to showcase students’ works in visual and musical arts. Invite families to share their heritage of traditional cuisines and music.