

An Uncommon Faithfulness: The Black Catholic Experience

Recently, I learned that in the Wisconsin state legislature a draft resolution is circulating to proclaim November 2019 as Black Catholic History Month. The sponsor, Representative LaKeshia Myers, is not Catholic, but well-schooled on our history. If only every Black Catholic knew about this 30-year distinction!

Born of the Black Catholic Movement (1968 – 1980s), dioceses pause in November to celebrate Black Catholic identity, accomplishments and contributions. They acknowledge holy men and women on the path to sainthood and recognize bishops, clergy, religious and lay trailblazers who loved and served the community. Some dioceses highlight Black Catholic organizations or embrace a vision of diasporic unity in Christ. Bold advocates recant and prayerfully reflect on racist elements of Catholic history in these United States. They share scholarly research to illuminate a spirituality of authentic worship expressed through gospel music, drum beats, relevant preaching, liturgical dance, high praise and hot tears. It is good to celebrate the Catholic faith experienced and expressed through our culture.

Among the treasures of a thriving contemporary Black Catholic Movement are the Black Catholic Theological Symposium (BCTS) and the Institute for Black Catholic Studies (IBCS). “In order to shape and sustain an authentic black and Catholic future, black Catholics must take action.” (Dr. M. Shawn Copeland, ed. *Uncommon Faithfulness: The Black Catholic Experience*)

BCTS membership comprises theologians, academicians and pastoral ministry practitioners who research, teach, write about and engage in theological reflection on wide-ranging questions of faith. In lay terms, theology is “God talk” that nurtures mature faith.

Most years, BCTS issues a collection of scholarly papers and book reviews authored by members. For instance, the 2019 Journal of the BCTS included submissions: “*Making a Way Out of No Way: The Oblate Sisters of Providence Pursue Higher Education Under Jim Crow*” (Diane Batts Morrow, Ph.D); “*Full, Conscious and Active Participation: Sunday Eucharist, Black Life and Theological Considerations*” (Kathleen Dorsey Bellow, D.Min.); and “*Cultural Colonization and Young Adult Liturgical Experience*” (timone davis D.Min.). Reading such articles can deepen awareness of Catholic history, understanding of liturgy and bolster ministry for (and with) millennials, respectively. Visit www.bcts.org.

Dr. Copeland continues, “Indeed, black Catholics have kept the faith, and in doing so they have changed the church.” IBCS at Xavier University of Louisiana summer program provides “theological and religious formation, cultural and practical preparation, and appropriately inculturated transmission of faith.” Go to <https://www.xula.edu/ibcs>. Act now!