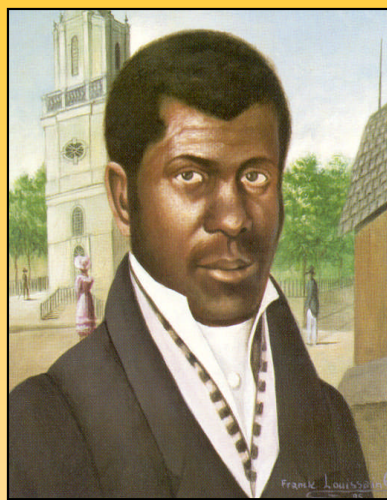


## About **Venerable Pierre Toussaint**



VENERABLE PIERRE TOUSSAINT  
1766-1853

### **Venerable Pierre Toussaint** **1766-1853**

Declared "Venerable" by the Pope John Paul II and a candidate for sainthood, Pierre Toussaint was born a slave in the former French colony of Haiti, and was brought to Manhattan by his wealthy owners in the late 1700's. A profoundly religious man, he used his earnings as a society hairdresser to buy freedom for other slaves, and to help the needy of every race, color and creed. During an outbreak of the plague in New York City, he risked his life to nurse victims of the dreaded disease. He also established an orphanage, raised large sums of money for Catholic causes, and instituted one of the nation's first schools for Black children. The holy man's life began in the St. Dominique household of Jean Berard, a liberal-minded master by the standards of the era. Unlike most slaves, Venerable Pierre had been taught to read and write, an asset which enabled him to study Sacred Scripture and to appreciate the writings of both Catholic and non-Catholic religious thinkers. After his master's death, he secretly supported the Berard family, which had fallen into bankruptcy, and accepted his own freedom only upon the death of the widowed Madame Berard. As famed for his piety as for his philanthropy and professional skill, he was casually referred to as a "saint" even in his own lifetime. Revered as he was, however, he still suffered the daily humiliation that was the lot of his race. He could not use public transport to see his clientele, and a bigoted usher barred him from attending Mass at the old cathedral, which his contributions had helped to build. Never-the-less he was originally interred in its churchyard after his death on June 30, 1853, joining his beloved wife, the former Juliette Noel, who had predeceased him two years earlier. In 1990 his remains were transferred to the crypt of St. Patrick's Cathedral on 5th Avenue at the direction of Cardinal O'Connor, a vigorous advocate of his canonization.

***Read more about Venerable Pierre Toussaint online or "Pierre Toussaint – A Biography" by Arthur Jones. Published by DOUBLEDAY, October 2003***