



Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Hartford
Office for Black Catholic Ministries



GOOD NEWS

Volume 3 Issue 3

Autumn 2006

Feast Days of Various Black Saints

- St. Cyprian Sept. 16
- St. Thais Oct. 8
- St. Demetrius Oct. 9
- St. Marcellus Oct. 30
- St. Martin de Porres Nov. 3
- St. Achilles Nov. 7
- St. Gelasius Nov. 21
- Learn more about these and other Black Saints in the "Dictionary of Saints"- Revised Edition by John J. De-laney, printed April 2005, available at the Catholic Bookstores.

Pierre Toussaint Individual Award



Mrs. Doris Barber, Individual Award Winner of the OBCM Pierre Toussaint Awards

Mrs. Doris Barber, a parishioner of St. Martin de Porres Church in New Haven, was selected as the recipient of the Individual Award for the Venerable Pierre Toussaint Award, offered biannually by the Office for Black Catholic Ministries.

drives the elderly to Mass, conducts fund-raising events, and plays a leadership role on every committee. Mrs. Barber has also consistently and positively affected her community. She tutors the young and counsels the elderly, in particular the developmentally disabled. Her true passion has been her joy and enthusiasm when teaching and loving these children of God. With her help and guidance, many of the disabled have reached their highest potential and have thus truly glorified God.

Mrs. Barber was chosen from among several nominees for her outstanding leadership and service to her parish and local community.

In accepting the award, Mrs. Barber said, "I did not expect an award for doing what I do. I do it because I love to do it and it makes the people, especially the children, happy." She continued to say, "I accept this award with a humble heart and will always cherish it."

Mrs. Barber recognizes the presence of Christ in everyone she meets. She works and interacts with children of all ethnicity. For fifty years she has been involved with her Church and the community at large. She is an Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist,

"For if you do this to the least of your brothers, you do it unto Me"

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Pierre Toussaint Organization Award

Black Family Enrichment Program (BFEP) is a division of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Hartford. Their outstanding work and care for individuals and families of the African Diaspora lead them to the Organization Award for the Venerable Pierre Toussaint Award. They provide counseling and guidance to families of color in the greater Hartford community. Their innovative and effective outreach programs have positively affected thousands of families in need. By using Afro-centric treatment models that draw heavily upon Catholic social teachings, the agency has infused the community with families that are empowered and enriched. Several of their services are: Family Violence Support Group, Family Literacy Services, Family Counseling, Abstinence Education, Black History Forum, Couples Counseling, Child and Adolescent Groups, and Community Awareness Seminars. BFEP utilizes an afrocentric mental health approach that



Employees and Board president of BFEP, the Organization Award Winner of the OBCM Pierre Toussaint Awards.

draws from and incorporates African history, tradition and heritage. The BFEP model facilitates the delivery of competent and culturally intelligent services. The organization exemplifies, through their many youth tutoring and mentoring programs, that the only real means that we have to change the future is to affect the young.

Special Thanks to all who support the OBCM Programs & Services. Also to those who attended the Pierre Toussaint Awards Banquet.

Director's Message

The spirit of Venerable Pierre Toussaint reverberated in and through those who attended the 4th biannual awards dinner which bears his name. Words do not come to mind that can truly describe the festive and joyous evening on October 21 2006, at the Marriott Hotel in Farmington. From the wonderful and uplifting remarks of Archbishop Mansell, the engagingly humorous repartee of the evening's master of ceremonies, Mr. Victor Cruse, and the spiritually reflective and encouraging words of Dr. Timothy Shriver, our keynote speaker, all was well this glorious night. A spunky silent auction featuring an array of wonderful items added to the festivity of the evening.

We had gathered to honor the recipients of the Venerable Pierre Toussaint Award. Their hard work, for the good of the community, stands as a beacon for those who have chosen to follow the example of Christ. Their selfless efforts for the good of so many are an example of true Christian witness.

Mrs. Doris Barber, the recipient of the Individual Award, has volunteered for over 50 years, providing encouragement and guidance to the New Haven community, in particular the developmentally disabled, both children and adults. Her spirit of love exemplifies our Christian call to love of neighbor.

The Black Family Enrichment Program of Catholic Charities, the recipient of the Organization Award, has worked with diligence and passion to provide counseling and guidance to families of color throughout the Greater Hartford community. They have achieved truly vital and positive changes for the under served in the area.

As the director of an agency for the Archdiocese of Hartford I am humbled to be a part of a people who have embraced the faith, a people who see Christ in all of His children, who have come to recognize that when we serve one another we are serving Him. Praise God!

The Freedom Ring



This year, the OBCM thought of presenting the honorees of the Pierre Toussaint Award, with an original trophy which powerfully portrays the extraordinary life and works of Venerable Pierre Toussaint. The result was a stunning work titled "The Freedom Ring." The artist, John Noelke, said of his inspiration, "It is a reminder of the moral imperative to be ever vigilant in freeing ourselves and others from the injustice of poverty and racism."

John Noelke received his BFA from the University of Texas, Austin, and his MFA from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. He recently won a national sculpture competition honoring Angela Merici. He is currently working on a project to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as a young man in Simsbury, CT with a life size bronze sculpture.

PHOTO GALLERY

From Our Pierre Toussaint Awards Banquet
October 21, 2006
Farmington Marriott Hotel



The Transformation of JT Part II

By Deacon Arthur Miller

"Yea, I mean, uh...Yes, the job is doing well." It had been six months and JT was still working for the same employer and had begun to become more assured of who he was and what he could do. "I've not missed any days and they ask me all the time to work more hours. So I'm feelin' pretty good about stuff." I told him that I had heard from his employer and they were absolutely pleased with his work and his contribution to their company.

I was also pleased. JT seemed less anxious about his future, yet there were little signs that were bothersome. He had yet to enroll in college, and his employer had not offered him benefits, health insurance in particular. When I asked him about entering Capital Community College he responded: "Well, I do plan on going, honest. It's just, right now I'm trying to take care of my daughter and ..." His voice drifted to a mumble. He shrunk into himself for a moment. I would have missed it had I not been watching closely. I have noticed that people often communicate more clearly with their silence than their noise. He sat quietly in the chair in my office. I decided not to push him, noticing from our many conversations

that he would speak honestly when allowed the freedom to speak at his pace. "I need an operation...I hurt my shoulder some kinda' way...I don't have any insurance. I can't afford to have it fixed and I can't afford to take any days off... I'm kinda stuck, so school right now is not on my mind."

His difficulties were greater than I had thought. In this perplexing country, the richest in the world, with the best hospitals in the world...and yet so many are unable to receive the care they need. I knew that JT had made many mistakes in his life, but he had a chance to get it right this time, to become an asset to the community. If he doesn't get his shoulder fixed he could end up disabled and dependent on others for his welfare. I knew that would not do him, his family, or community any good at all. I called his employer to inquire about benefits. Nothing was available for him, and there was nothing I could do. What a conundrum.

When JT got up to leave my office, he turned and said, "I got to get to work, they need me." He turned and left. I thought as I watched the office door close, "I know they do JT, I know they do. We'll figure this out, I promise."

(Continued in next issue)

A Plea for Darfur

By Deacon Arthur Miller

10,000 miles away people were dying, even the beauty of the sparkling late summer afternoon could not deny the brutal truth that people were dying. 10,000 miles was not enough distance to muffle the cry of the slaughtered. 10,000 miles away...yet the stench of death penetrated the consciousness of our souls as we traveled south from Hartford to N.Y. City. It was there in N.Y. that we would gather to lift our voices in a mighty chorus of anguish over those who were dying 10,000 miles away in the Darfur region of the Sudan. We joined with one harkening voice to awaken those who had chosen not to hear, nor see, nor respond to the atrocity that had befallen the people of Darfur. The ugly word *GENOCIDE* had been used to describe the happenings there, and too many of us were silent, but not this day, not this beautiful Sunday in late September 2006. From around the Northeast people came together, and I was there. I watched at the venue in Central Park where we heard from those who were witnesses of the Genocide. Their speeches were magnificent and frightening, uplifting in signs of hope, yet devastating in the reality of the magnitude of so many, many who have been killed. The number, the awful number: 500,000 DEAD, 3,000,000 displaced, living in veritable death camps. No food, no water, no help... death stalks through the camps and claims its victims.

So we gathered in protest, 500 from CT and nearly 10,000 more, Jews, Muslims, Catholics, Protestants... together asking our government and all governments to stop the killing, stop the slaughter, stop the rape. Bring peace to Darfur, bring peace to Darfur. All of us must respond, we cannot be bystanders. Please call your local, state, and federal officials to stop the genocide in Darfur. Tell them "Not on My Watch!"

OBCM Bible Study Class



Students listen attentively in one of the Thursday evening Bible Study classes offered by the OBCM. This semester, which runs from September to November, the class is studying Saint Paul's Letters in the New Testament. A copy of the syllabus is available for anyone who is interested. This semester's classes are sponsored by the generosity of the Knights of Columbus, Supreme Council. If you are interested in signing up for next semester's classes, April - June, 2007, please call the office. The cost is \$10 per person. All are welcome!

**Thou Shall NOT
Be A Bystander
To Injustice**

**ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD
OFFICE FOR BLACK CATHOLIC MINISTRIES**



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SAVE these DATES

JANUARY 15, 2007

*2nd Annual Archdiocesan
Mass in honor of
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

Cathedral of St. Joseph
140 Farmington Ave., Hartford

9:00 AM

FEBRUARY 4, 2007

*Annual Mass Celebration
in honor of
Black History Month*

Cathedral of St. Joseph
140 Farmington Ave., Hartford

2:00 PM

Featuring the
Archdiocesan Gospel Choir

*Please call the OBCM for details on any of
these events. (860) 243-0648*

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**Profile of an OBCM
Board Member**

Ms. Victoria Virgo-Christie, Vice President of the Board, is a native of Hartford and is employed as Office Manager, at the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Provincial Headquarters in Windsor. Besides being on OBCM Board, she also serves on the Board of the Black Family Enrichment Program, Catholic Charities. She attends St. Michael Church in Hartford and is a member of the Gospel Choir, an Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist, President of the Parish Council, and a member of the Ladies of St. Peter Claver. She is the coordinator of the Social Justice Committee and the Food Pantry there. She was also involved in reviving the Youth Group Ministry at St. Michael. She strongly believes that our Catholic/Christian efforts must focus on the youth.

Ms. Virgo-Christie was a recipient of the 2004 Ven. Pierre Tousaint Award and now resides in Windsor.