

Q1

JAN - MAR

THE VILLAGE DRUM

WINTER 2026



Office of Black Catholic Ministries
Sr. Jane Nesmith, Director



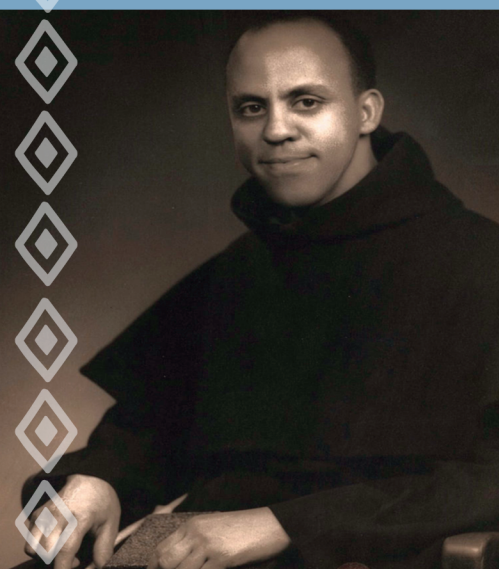
Catholic Diocese
of Cleveland



@BlkCatholicsCLE

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

Explore resources for the National Day of Prayer for the African American and African Family. This annual observance takes place on the first Sunday of Black History Month. Click for the [RESOURCE](#) or scan the QR Code below:



ANOTHER AFRICAN AMERICAN ON THE ROAD TO SAINTHOOD

BY SR. JANE NESMITH, SBS

Servant of God Martin Maria de Porres Ward, OFM Conv was born on March 20, 1918, in Charlestown, Massachusetts. He was one of 13 children of an interracial family who were Methodist. The family first moved to Brooklyn, New York before moving to Washington, DC where he attended Dunbar High School, the first public school for African Americans in the nation's capital. A friend invited him to attend Mass at St. Augustine Catholic Church, the mother church for the African-American Catholic community in DC. In 1936, at the age of 17, he becomes a Catholic.

After his conversion, he felt he had a vocation not only to the priesthood but to be a missionary in Africa. After graduation in 1939, he spent one year with another religious community. In 1945, he applies to and was accepted into the Immaculate Conception Province of the Order Friars Minor Conventuals (OFM Conv).

Shortly after his ordination in 1955, he volunteered to be in the first group of friars to go the newly established mission in Brazil. He ministered in Brazil for 44 years as a friar priest, teacher, hospital chaplain, and as a simple parish priest. He had the reputation of always being available to people. He was noted for being a very compassionate confessor and counselor. He not only brought people back to the church, but he brought many into the Church. He drew his strength from two things: the Eucharist and his devotion to Mary. He said the rosary every day.

His life and ministry can be summed up in a phrase that he would share with people: "Laus Deo Semper" which means "Praise be to God always." It was apparent that he lived out this saying as a friar, a priest, and a missionary. Servant of God Martin Maria de Porres Ward, pray for us.

JANUARY

Friday January 16, 9am

Memorial Liturgy: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist, Cleveland

Presider: Bishop Michael G. Woost

Homilist: Fr. Kareem Smith, Archdiocese of New York

FEBRUARY

Black History Month

Sunday, February 1, 2026

National Day of Prayer for African and African American Families

Saturday, February 7, 5-7:30pm

Thea Bowman: Embracing the Diversity of the Catholic Church

St. Dominic School, Shaker Heights

Mass followed by light supper and presentation.

To register, call 261-991-1444.

Sunday, February 8, 1:30-3:30pm

The Problem of Human Trafficking

St. Agnes / Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Cleveland

Guest speakers from the NEO Human Trafficking Task Force, Cleveland Police and Cleveland Rape Crisis Center

February 18-20, 2026

Annual Lenten Revival

St. Aloysius / St. Agatha Church, Cleveland

Guest Preacher: Fr. Kareem Smith, Archdiocese of New York

THEA BOWMAN DAY OF RETREAT: BLACK CATHOLIC HISTORY MONTH

BY PHILLIS CLIPPS



The Thea Bowman Day of Retreat was held at the Center for Pastoral Leadership on November 15, 2025, with approximately 80 attendees. The program featured a performance by the Sanyuka Children's Choir, an esteemed ensemble from Uganda whose occasional tours across the United States aim to raise awareness about the challenges confronting orphaned and vulnerable children. Their presentation included uplifting music and narratives that conveyed joy, optimism, and support inspired by faith. The choir's repertoire of original compositions, praise and worship selections, and dynamic African drumming and dance was a delight to all attendees.

Dr. Valerie D. Lewis-Mosley, RN, D.Min., MAPM, MSJ—a distinguished Catholic theologian and leader with a notable commitment to advancing the legacy and canonization of Sister Thea Bowman—served as retreat facilitator. Dr. Lewis-Mosley not only provided insights into Black Catholic history and spirituality, but emphasized Sr. Thea's enduring vision for the Church and her lifelong dedication to celebrating Black culture and promoting the Black Catholic experience both nationally and internationally. She emphasized the responsibility of Black Catholics to share their faith and actively participate in Church life, encouraging individuals to pursue leadership roles in evangelization and community engagement.

DEACON HARDIN MARTIN'S MEN'S BIBLE STUDY

BY KENNETH WHITE



We are so grateful to the late Deacon Hardin Martin, formally a parishioner of St. Agnes / Our Lady of Fatima Parish who had the foresight and the initiative to gather men from various parishes to formulate a Bible Study that has been financially supported by the Black and Indian Mission Grant since its foundation in 1990. The men who continue to participate are from the parishes of St. Monica, St. Agnes / Our Lady of Fatima, St. Aloysius / St. Agatha, and Holy Spirit. They aim to actively support each others spiritual needs through participation, evangelization and other related church programs.

The men wholeheartedly appreciate the role of Fr. David Domanski as Spiritual Director, and I am honored to be able to step up to the plate to facilitate the meeting on behalf of our departed leader and friend. It will continue to remain an integral part of the great legacy that he left to the Diocese of Cleveland and he shall be remembered in our hearts and our prayers for years to come.

His wife, Rosary, continues to be a very active member of the Church.

PRAYER WARRIORS WOMEN'S RETREAT

BY SHAWN KENNEDY



As I entered Mulligan Hall at Holy Spirit Church, the mouth-watering smells of breakfast was in the air, and the room was filled with an energy among sisters in Christ Jesus from around the Diocese of Cleveland. All were eager to let go and let God lead the way. Although the focus of the day was "Forgiveness," we discussed several of God's attributes visible in our lives that enable us to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the goodness of God and how that is manifested our daily lives.

To illustrate how forgiveness brings about healing for both the forgiver and the forgiven, we listened to the song "A Lovely Day" by Bill Withers. We were encouraged to get up out of our seats and sway to the inspirational words and melody of the song. The movements stimulated the feeling of freedom and joy one receives when past hurts have been forgiven. It was a beautiful sight to see.

The keynote speaker, Claudia M. Bolden-Harden, gave a dynamic presentation on the importance of prayer when pondering forgiveness, especially when the person needing forgiveness is oneself. We explored the importance of forgiving ourselves while acknowledging the difficulty in doing so. We even had an opportunity to stir our creative juices as we constructed a personal fan using stickers, pictures and inspirational quotes. The fan serves as a message to us, as they symbolize past hurts that we thankfully release, current situations that we prayerfully address and future encounters that we openly receive.

DIOCESAN YOUTH CONFERENCE

BY ANTOINETTE SMITH

The Office of Black Catholic Ministries sponsored ten young people to attend CLE 21:6 youth conference on January 10, 2026. It was an awesome experience to see so many high school students from different parishes all unite in praising the Lord. We had several inspiring speakers that spoke on faith, joy and suffering, and provide attendees with the tools and strategies for living a pleasing life for and with God, which led to some life changing perspectives. Adoration had the most impact on the youth and provided deep emotional healing and a recharging to their spiritual life.

The youth enjoyed the conference and returned with tools to live out their faith and a stronger desire for prayer. It had a great balance of spiritual growth, great music and fun. We encourage all high school students to attend the diocesan youth conference next year in 2027.



Sunday, February 22, time TBD
Black History Month Luncheon
St. Aloysius/St. Agatha Church,
Cleveland
Contact the parish for more
information.

MARCH

Saturday, March 7, 11:30 am – 3 pm

Women's History Month
Celebration honoring Sr.
Juanita Healey, CSJ
St. Aloysius/St. Agatha Church,
Cleveland
RSVP at 216-391-1655

March 19, 6:30-8 pm African
Presence in Scripture
Facilitator: Cary Dabney
St. Agnes/Our Lady of Fatima,
Cleveland

March 21, 9:30am-3 pm Black
Catholic Men's Retreat
St Agnes/Our Lady of Fatima,
Cleveland
Facilitator: Fr. Charles Smith,
SVD



CELEBRATION OF THE WORKS OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

BY SR. JANE NESMITH, SBS

The liturgy was a moving tribute, filled with prayerful remembrance and a spirit of unity. The music and readings highlighted Dr. King's vision for justice and peace, inspiring all in attendance to continue his work in our communities. The Most Reverend Michael Woost presided, and concelebrants included Fr. Damian Ference, Fr. David Domanski, OFM, Cap, Fr. Paul Dressler, OFM, Cap, Fr. Dismas Boeff, OSB, Deacon Mike Hayes and Fr. Kareem Smith from the Archdiocese of New York.

The presence of such distinguished clergy, along with Fr. Kareem Smith's dynamic and heartfelt homily, the harmonious voices of the Diocesan Gospel Choir, and the inspiring gestures of the Youth Praise Dancers deepened the significance of the gathering and reminded us of the enduring power of faith in the pursuit of equality and love.

Eighth grade students from St. Mary in Akron, Ss. Robert and William, Holy Name, and St. Anthony of Padua Schools were our special guests. Students were delighted to hear about ways that they can model Christian discipleship. Each class had a photo op with Bishop Woost followed by a cathedral tour presentation by Fr. Joseph Mamich and Fr. Damian Ference. Their pizza party afterwards was enriched by special chats and presentations from the Office of Black Catholic Ministries, Youth Ministry Office, and Father Kareem.

DIOCESAN WEEK OF SERVICE

Join us in service across
Northeast Ohio!

Throughout the week, volunteers will partner with Catholic Charities, parish groups, and community organizations. Together, we will participate in a variety of service projects that reflect our shared mission of compassion, dignity, and justice.

Visit our website to learn how you can get involved:
dioceseofcleveland.org/weekofservice

Visit our website to learn more about our ministries and subscribe to receive our email newsletter.

dioceseofcleveland.org/BlkCatholicsCLE



Follow us on social media



@BlkCatholicsCLE