

PASTORES DABO VOBIS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL BLACK CATHOLIC SEMINARIANS ASSOCIATION

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A Work of the Entire Church

A Message from the President

ALLOW ME TO OFFER A WORD OF HEARTFELT THANKS to all who joined the NBCSA on 24 April, the inaugural **National Day of Prayer for Vocations in the Black Community**.

As many of you know, the centerpiece of the National Day of Prayer was a special Mass offered at **Theological College**, the National Seminary of The Catholic University of America. That prayerful moment would not have been possible without the generous support of Bishop Martin D. Holley, auxiliary bishop of Washington, and Sulpician Father Melvin C. Blanchette, rector of Theological College. I am grateful, too, for the support of the faculty, staff, and my brother seminarians at Theological College.

The NBCSA has been made aware of local participation in the National Day of Prayer in no less than nine U.S. dioceses. I also thank Valerie Washington, executive director of the **National Black Catholic Congress**, and Father Don Fest, director of communications for the **Josephites**, for helping us spread the word.

In a special way I extend appreciation to **Mark Zimmermann**, Editor of the *Catholic Standard* of the Archdiocese of Washington, whose insightful reporting captured the intent and spirit of the National Day of Prayer. Mark's story on the National Day of Prayer has been featured on various websites and in diocesan newspapers throughout the country.

I do not hesitate to echo Bishop Holley, who reminded us on 24 April that the work of promoting and sustaining vocations in the Black community is a work not exclusive to those involved in the Black apostolate. The importance of intercultural ministerial collaboration was confirmed and exemplified by the historic **Catholic Cultural Diversity Network Convocation**, held in May and convened by the Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Amid diversity, our Catholic oneness compels us to work together.

Indeed, promoting vocations in the Black Catholic community will require the work of the entire Catholic community. The NBCSA thus welcomes the prayers and participation of all. Ω

Christopher S. Rhodes

NBCSA President

“I will give you shepherds...”

Jeremiah 3:15

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The Newsletter of the
National Black Catholic
Seminarians Association

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EDITOR

Desmond Drummer

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email to the National Black Catholic
Seminarians Association.

NATIONAL BLACK CATHOLIC SEMINARIANS ASSOCIATION

*The NBCSA is an affiliate of the
National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus*

Mailing Address

Christopher S. Rhodes
Theological College
401 Michigan Avenue, NE
Washington, DC 20017

Email Address

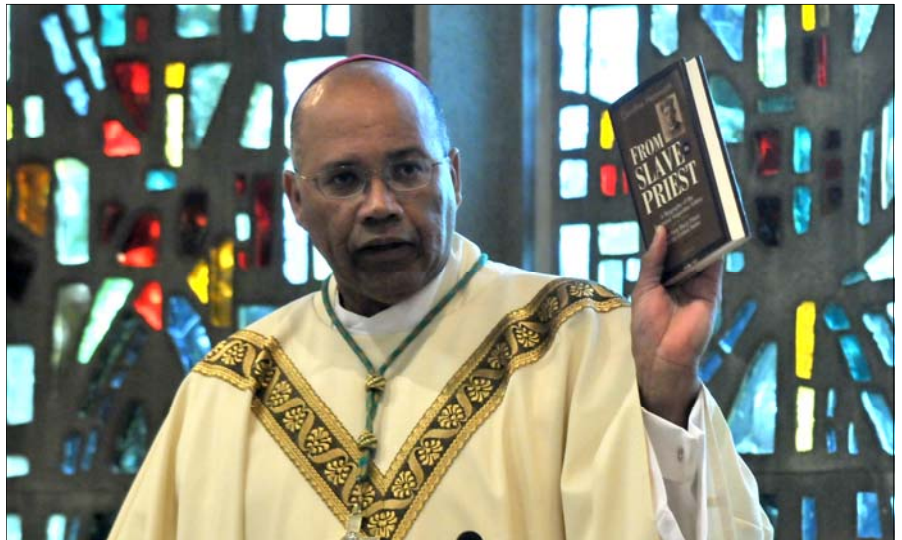
nbcseminarians@gmail.com

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NOTES:

National Day of Prayer for Vocations in the Black Community

24 April 2010



Bishop **Martin D. Holley**, auxiliary bishop of Washington, holds up a copy of *FROM SLAVE TO PRIEST* (by Sister Caroline Hemesath, SSF) at a Mass at **Theological College** in Washington to mark the National Day of Prayer for Vocations in the Black Community. The book is a biography of Father Augustus Tolton, who when he was ordained in 1886 became the first recognized African American priest in the United States.



NBCSA president **Christopher S. Rhodes**, seminarian of the Archdiocese of Louisville, visits with **Bishop Martin D. Holley**, auxiliary bishop of Washington, following an April 24 Mass at **Theological College** for the National Day of Prayer for Vocations in the Black Community. Bishop Holley, who also serves as the chairman of the USCCB Subcommittee for African American Affairs, was the main celebrant of the Mass.

Photos: Rafael Crisostomo / CATHOLIC STANDARD, Archdiocese of Washington

THE SYMPOSIUM ON BLACK VOCATIONS REVISITED

Reverend Edward B. Branch | Lyke House Catholic Center, Atlanta University Center

Stir into Flame

A Symposium on the Vocation to the Catholic Priesthood in the African American Community

May 3-5, 2010 | University of Notre Dame

The symposium on Black vocations involved lay leaders, 6 bishops, 20 African American priests, and 1 permanent deacon. It was the collective effort of the National Black Catholic Congress, the Institute for Church Life (ICL) of the University of Notre Dame, and the African American bishops in the United States.

The meeting was a public discussion on the state of Black Catholic priestly vocations by a participating audience of clergy. Dr. John Cavadini, director of the Institute for Church Life, was an exceptional host. There were essays presented by Bishop George Murry, Bishop Joseph Perry, and Father Patrick Smith. There were panels of exceptional young people spanning high school to graduate study, and a panel of bishops reflecting on the context of the African American male today. Bishop John Ricard and Bishop Edward Braxton gave two very excellent homilies at the concelebrated Masses at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart on the university campus.

A brief but thorough history of Black priests, presented by Bishop George Murray, set the tone and context for the workshop portion of our time together. Dr. Don Pope-Davis, vice president and associate provost at the University of Notre Dame, led us through a process of fashioning post-symposium home work.

Continued on next page

SEMINARIAN PROFILE:

Joshua Johnson

Diocese of Baton Rouge



Joshua Johnson is a seminarian for the Diocese of Baton Rouge. He is from St. George Catholic Church in Baton Rouge and attended Southern University prior to entering the seminary. In May he completed studies at St. Joseph Seminary College in St. Benedict, Louisiana and will continue at Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans. He has led many youth retreats throughout the diocese, taught adult faith formation classes, and traveled the country giving talks on vocations. He is also known for hosting and rapping at many youth events including Abbey Youth Fest, MP3, and the Alive Youth Conferences. As Joshua moves from college seminary to major seminary, he looks forward to spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all, especially through his media evangelization on Focus TV (www.focustvonline.com) and His Tube (www.histube.tv). Ω



“...after my own heart.”

VOCATIONS SYMPOSIUM (CONTINUED)

What struck me most by way of reflection on the experience is that, by and large, there was nothing that the group of now well seasoned priests and bishops had not heard before. However, what the symposium helped us do is recognize more directly and specifically the social context in which we now work. The environment in which we are trying to help young men hear the call is diametrically opposed to their hearing it. Also, we may be praying hard for vocations but not working very effectively.

Despite our social context we know God is calling young men to priesthood. We must create relational strategies that enable them to hear and respond. Our campus ministry centers must be enabled to reap the harvest that is present there.

Relationships are more important than anything in achieving success. Our pastoral leaders must be challenged and enabled to do their part in supporting those who are in the “pipeline” with regular contact and prayer. Seminarians must be encouraged to seek relationships with clergy in the field. Potential recruits must be invited into the actual work of ministry right where they are; they cannot choose what they do not know.

We have much work to do. Three task groups have been charged with a variety of concrete actions. Some of the activities involve interfacing with the Knights of Peter Claver/Ladies Auxiliary, promoting family and parish-based prayers for vocations, providing organized seminary visits for groups of young people, and utilizing new media, to name a few. The task groups will reassemble in the future to report on their progress.

We expect success because all things are possible with God. Ω

“Stir into Flame: A Symposium on the Vocation to Catholic Priesthood in the African American Community” was sponsored by the National Black Catholic Congress in partnership with the African American Catholic bishops and the Institute for Church Life of the University of Notre Dame.

NBCSA ANNUAL MEETING: ST. LOUIS, MO

The Annual Meeting of the National Black Catholic Seminarians Association in 2010 will again coincide with the annual gathering of the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus (NBCCC), July 26-29, 2010. **The two-day seminarian program will be held Monday, July 26 through Tuesday, July 27. Meeting site:** Embassy Suites St. Louis-Airport Hotel, Bridgeton, MO. **Registration fee:** \$165 (\$210 after July 5). **Hotel rate:** \$99/night. Contact the NBCSA for more information: nbcseminarians@gmail.com

MONDAY • JULY 26, 2010

NBCSA Briefing & Welcome
Midafternoon Prayer & Rosary
Tour of the St. Charles Lwanga Center
Mass w/ the NBCCC
Eucharistic Exposition & Adoration
with Solemn Night Prayer

TUESDAY • JULY 27, 2010

Lauds & Mass w/ NBCCC
NBCSA National Lecture & Lunch
Fr. Cyprian Davis, OSB
*“The Black American Priest:
History of Service to the Church”*
Pilgrimage to the
Cathedral Basilica of Saint Louis
Reception & Dinner