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Word™

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FAITH INFORMED

(Part Five of National Black Catholic Pastoral Plan)

Call together all the men, women, and children, and the foreigners who live in your towns, so that everyone may hear it and learn to honor the LORD your God and to obey his teachings faithfully. (Deuteronomy 31: 12)

We cannot engage our faith without understanding it. The catechism, Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, recently wrote, is “fascinating because it speaks to us of our very destiny and that is why it concerns each one of us very closely.” It is challenging—and life-changing—and so, the Pope continued:

Because of this I ask you: study the catechism with passion and perseverance! Sacrifice your time for it! Study it in the silence of your room, read it together, if you are friends, form groups and study networks, exchange ideas on the Internet. In any case remain in dialogue on your faith!

Our perspective as African Americans

The need to educate ourselves in the faith was a frequent theme in diocesan reports on their Days of Reflection in preparation for Congress XI. This is important to us as individuals trying to understand “our very destiny,” but also because as a religious minority among African Americans, we sometimes find ourselves challenged by friends and relatives who have misconceptions about the Catholic tradition. “Cradle Catholic” is a strong identity for many of us, yet our children find their identity challenged by friends from other Christian traditions. It is important to tell the story of our Catholic heritage and the presence of Catholics of African descent in America, which dates to the earliest sixteenth century Spanish settlers in St. Augustine, Florida.

Our faith engaged

- We commit ourselves to deepen our knowledge and understanding, through Bible study, adult faith formation classes, catechesis, retreats, faith sharing and other means to spiritual growth.
- We urge dioceses across the nation to honor Black Catholic History month each November, sharing the centuries-long faith journey of our people in America.



AN HISTORICAL MOMENT

(Resignation of Benedict XVI)

Dear Brothers,

I have convoked you to this Consistory, not only for the three canonizations, but also to communicate to you a decision of great importance for the life of the Church. After having repeatedly examined my conscience before God, I have come to the certainty that my strengths, due to an advanced age, are no longer suited to an adequate exercise of the Petrine ministry. I am well aware that this ministry, due to its essential spiritual nature, must be carried out not only with words and deeds, but no less with prayer and suffering. However, in today's world, subject to so many rapid changes and shaken by questions of deep relevance for the life of faith, in order to govern the bark of Saint Peter and proclaim the Gospel, both strength of mind and body are necessary, strength which in the last few months, has deteriorated in me to the extent that I have had to recognize my incapacity to adequately fulfill the ministry entrusted to me.

For this reason, and well aware of the seriousness of this act, with full freedom I declare that I renounce the ministry of

Bishop of Rome, Successor of Saint Peter, entrusted to me by the Cardinals on 19 April 2005, in such a way, that as from 28 February 2013, at 20:00 hours, the See of Rome, the See of Saint Peter, will be vacant and a Conclave to elect the new Supreme Pontiff will have to be convoked by those whose competence it is.

Dear Brothers,

I thank you most sincerely for all the love and work with which you have supported me in my ministry and I ask pardon for all my defects. And now, let us entrust the Holy Church to the care of Our Supreme Pastor, Our Lord Jesus Christ, and implore his holy Mother Mary, so that she may assist the Cardinal Fathers with her maternal solicitude, in electing a new Supreme Pontiff. With regard to myself, I wish to also devotedly serve the Holy Church of God in the future through a life dedicated to prayer.

From the Vatican, 10 February
2013 BENEDICTUS PP XVI



In June of 2012 Pope Benedict met with the Divine Word Missionaries gathered in Nemi, Italy for their 17th General Chapter. At this assembly the Pope greeted the Missionaries from throughout the world. Front cover photo shows the Pope receiving a carving of Mary from Indonesia.

At that time he walked and stood strong. Who would have known that in a few short months his health would so deteriorate and in an historic announcement as noted above on February 13, 2013 he would resign as Pontiff.



in a word or two



Bishop Curtis Guillory, SVD, Bishop of Beaumont, celebrated the 25th anniversary of his Episcopal ordination on February 10, 2013.

The Diocese of Beaumont celebrated the event with an inspirational Mass of Thanksgiving and a huge reception for the Bishop. The son of a sharecropper, and the oldest of 16 children Bishop Guillory is seen here with some of his brothers and sisters present for the event. Congratulations Bishop Guillory.



The same day Barack Obama was inaugurated in public ceremonies to a second term as U.S. president, Lorenzo Herman, a Jesuit scholastic, became president of the National Black Catholic Seminarians Association.

His path to the Catholic Church and a religious vocation began in his home-

town of Cleveland -- where he was raised in a Baptist family.

He went to a Jesuit high school, St. Ignatius in his hometown of Cleveland, and joined the church at age 19.

"When I decided to become Catholic, my family was like, 'Congratulations. Tell us about it,'" Herman said. "It was (about) going to where I fit and where I felt the most comfortable. And when I became a Jesuit, they were very happy with that. My daddy's a deacon. I never had an experience with my family that my path was a contradiction to their Christianity."

He is a seminarian of the Jesuits' Oregon province -- which includes Washington state, Alaska, Idaho, Montana and Oregon. And he is one of few black Jesuits.

St. Mary's Academy in New Orleans, Louisiana is pleased to announce that it will host the national traveling exhibition Freedom Riders, which looks at six months in 1961 when more than 400 courageous Americans, old and young, black and white, men and

women, Northern and Southern risked their lives to challenge segregated facilities in the South.

The Freedom Riders exhibition at St. Mary's Academy combines powerful photography and news coverage of the 1961 Freedom Rides and examines the movement from many perspectives — that of the Riders, the Kennedy administration, and the international community. To enhance the experience, visitors can use their cell phones to access powerful first-hand audio accounts of this dangerous experiment in the fight for civil rights.

The Freedom Riders had a simple but daring plan: to board buses in small interracial groups to test and challenge segregated facilities in the South. The Freedom Riders endured savage beatings, humiliation, and imprisonment, but ultimately, their brave actions and commitment to nonviolence



changed America forever. Freedom Riders explores this little-known chapter in civil rights history, and explains how the selfless actions of the Freedom Riders laid the groundwork for some of the most important civil rights legislation in our nation's history.

The exhibition, created by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History and PBS's flagship history series, AMERICAN EXPERIENCE, is funded through a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. "We are pleased to have been selected as a site for this exhibition," said St. Mary's Academy librarian and site coordinator Michelle Ochillo, adding that the Freedom Riders are an inspiring example of what ordinary individuals can accomplish. "The actions and the bravery of the Freedom Riders provide invaluable lessons for our young people today, and for anyone who hopes to make a difference in our community, country, or world."

St. Mary's Academy, run by the Sisters of the Holy Family, is one of twenty sites nationwide to host the Freedom Riders exhibition. The public is invited to view the exhibition, free of charge, February 18-22 from 9:00 am- 4:30 pm. For more information, please call Michelle Ochillo at (504) 245-0200.

Divine Word Missionaries is an international missionary community of over 7,000 brothers and priests. In 1905 the SVDs began working among African Americans in the Southern United States. Today, Divine Word Missionaries work in over 35 parishes in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas and Arkansas.

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