

in a

Word™

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**We Are Joyful
for
Hope Will Not Fail Us!**

Hope Does Not Disappoint

Working Together For Good In His Name

by

Bishop Curtis J. Guillory, SVD

"I hope you get well," someone tells a sick friend. "I hope your project works out," someone tells another. All of us hope that God will spare us from hurricanes.

We use the word HOPE many times in our conversations. Our use of the word already indicates that its roots are not in our hands but they lie elsewhere. Jeremiah 17: 5-7 puts it this way: *"Cursed is the man who trusts in human beings, who seeks his strength in the flesh, whose heart turns away from the Lord ... Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose hope is the Lord."*

When a person says to a sick friend, "I hope you get well," the person is implying that if he had the power, he would make the sick friend well, but since he doesn't, he trusts the sick friend to a higher power, namely, God. Of course, the earthly things that are available to make the sick person well must be used, e.g. doctors, medications, etc. But ultimately, the healing is in God's hands. God is the one who can make our hope a reality.

On Nov. 30, 2007, Pope Benedict XVI published an encyclical on HOPE called *"Saved by Hope,"* taken from Romans 8:24. One of the reasons for publishing the encyclical was that we live in a world without hope, or with a misplaced hope; that is, hope in oneself, in science, in political structures or ideologies.

Genuine hope is rooted in Christ, and if we have a relationship with Christ, then we have genuine hope. Pope Benedict writes: "A world without God is a world without hope."

The Pope refers to St. Josephine Bakhita, an African slave, as an example of hope rooted in Christ. St.

Josephine was born in Darfur, Sudan, around 1869 and canonized by Pope John Paul II in 2000.

At the age of 9, she was kidnapped by slave traders, beaten until she bled, and sold five times. She was flogged every day, and she had 144 visible scars on her body throughout her life.



As she was being flogged, she had hope, we can presume, of finding a kind master.

She was finally bought by an Italian Christian family, and she came to know a different kind of master. Through this master who treated her like a human being she came to know Jesus Christ. She came to know that during her ordeals and sufferings Christ knew her and loved her.

She said, "I am definitely loved, and whatever happens to me, I am awaited by love, and so my life is good." Her hope helped her not to become like her cruel masters or to despair. She clung to a hope that there was a power greater than herself and her masters that was at work, giving her the strength and the courage to live in the midst of so much cruelty.

Hope is confidence that God will not renege on His promises. Hope fills the void of our finitude, incompleteness, and fragility, and helps us to go through life and to face the challenges that come our way. The person of hope knows that life will be fulfilled, that God is with us, and that there is no reason to be discouraged or to despair. Hope does not disappoint!

We need hope that goes beyond the finite, beyond fulfillment of personal goals and shared achievements, and which advances the quality of life in common with others. The great hope of human beings can only be in God, whose unconditional love enables us to endure all of life's many disappointments.

Many people have lost hope in God because they do not think God can fulfill His promises. They look around and see so much injustice in the world and people getting away with murder. Others do not see God's justice taking root, so they take justice into their own hands, promoting even more violence and cruelty.

In our sufferings, hope keeps us going if we unite our sufferings to those of Christ. Mother Teresa had hope rooted in God, because during the times she felt the absence of God, she kept doing what she was called to do -- minister to those most in need. Our prayer should always be: "In you, O Lord, I have placed my hope, and I shall never be put to shame."

A CELEBRATION OF LIVING HISTORY

Paying Tribute to an African American Pastor

Submitted by Orida and Jules Edwards III

Joy was overflowing at Immaculate Heart of Mary in Lafayette, Louisiana as the faith community hosted a celebration of the 44th anniversary of priestly ordination of its pastor, Rev. Thomas James, S.V.D., V.E., on December 15, 2013. The church was filled to capacity with family members, friends, religious sisters, community supporters, parishioners, visitors, and representatives of various organizations and ministries from the parish and school.

The first of three children born to the late Collins and Eva James, Fr. Thomas James was educated at Notre Dame Elementary School in St. Martinville, Louisiana, and at St. Augustine's Seminary in Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi. On December 18, 1969, Fr. Thomas James and Fr. Alvin Dixon were ordained in the chapel of St. Augustine's Seminary by Auxiliary Bishop Warren Boudreaux of the Lafayette diocese. Fr. James immediately became an active member of the Black Clergy Association and devoted much time and energy toward the goal of increasing vocations to the priesthood among African-Americans.

His first assignment was in educational ministry at Verbum Dei High School in Los Angeles, California, where he ministered as priest, teacher, deputy, and administrator from 1970 through 1986, including six years of service as high school principal. He worked tirelessly to develop the neighborhood surrounding the school and minister to the residents there. The work was difficult, demanding, challenging, painful, and at times very frustrating. It produced both successes and failures; however, both were learning opportunities. By the grace of God, seemingly impossible results were achieved and he reported that several miracles were observed along the way.

Fr. James' second assignment was as an associate pastor at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Lafayette, Louisiana where he ministered from 1987 through 1988. He was thereafter assigned to St. Edward Catholic Church in New Iberia, Louisiana where he served as pastor from 1988 through 2002. He prayerfully invited the Holy Spirit to increase his gifts and then invited the parishioners at St. Edwards to share their gifts and talents to jointly build something special within their worship community. That work has borne much fruit.

In October of 2002 Fr. James was asked to return to Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Lafayette, Louisiana, to serve as pastor. Immaculate Heart of Mary was built as a parish to accommodate Fathers Anthony Bourges, Maurice Rousseve, Vincent Smith, and Francis Wade the first four African-American priests ordained by the Society of the Divine Word Missionaries in Bay Saint Louis in 1934.. The Divine Word Missionaries have provided I.H.M. with priests on a continuous basis since 1934.

As pastor of such an historic parish as Immaculate Heart of Mary, Fr. James is constantly reminded of these "First Four" African-American S.V.D. priests ordained in the United States and he constantly reflects on how they created a

worship space and community which exemplified the words of their founder, Saint Arnold Janssen: "To proclaim the Good News is the first and greatest act of love of neighbor." According to Fr. James, "the charism of the Divine Word Missionaries grew at Immaculate Heart of Mary and as it did, the miracle of St. Arnold became embedded in spirit of the people in this historic place." In addition to his duties as pastor, Fr. James also serves as Episcopal Vicar of the Central Region of the Diocese of Lafayette.

Fr. James grew up in a small family with great parents whose love for their children was visible and strong. He learned to value education at a very early age while attending a segregated school run by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. He enjoys a very close relationship with his two siblings – Sr. Geneva James, S.S.F. and Mr. Collins James Jr. – who paid special tribute to their parents during the Anniversary Mass by making presentations of flowers and prayers before our Blessed Mother in loving memory of their parents, the late Mr. and Mrs. Collins (Eva) James.

During the reception in honor of Fr. James, many individuals, organizations, and ministries made presentations and special tributes in appreciation of Fr. James' ministry, leadership, service, and example. The great love and admiration was evident by the gifts and talents of the many volunteers and contributors who worked unceasingly to make this event a very special and memorable one to mark this occasion. Fr. James eloquently expressed his gratitude and appreciation to all who came to celebrate with him and to all who were unable to attend but sent kind sentiments.



Fr. James blesses roses to be presented by his siblings, Collins James Jr. and Sr. Geneva James, S.S.F., in loving memory of their parents. Photograph by Robin Mays.



Fr. Thomas James, S.V.D., V.E. with some of clergy in attendance at reception. Photograph by Tracy Mouton.

in a word or two



St. Mary's Academy Adds Their 2 Cents for SOCIALgrlz First Mobile Application for African-American Girls

SOCIALgrlz, LLC (SGZ), a first-of-its-kind mobile, Web and publishing company dedicated solely to improving the quality of life for African-American girls ages 13-17, announces its second 2 Cents for SOCIALgrlz War Room at St. Mary's Academy in New Orleans to support its crowd-source funding campaign. The Add Your 2 Cents campaign will help develop the first mobile application for African-American girls on the Apple and Android platforms. Students at the all-girls Roman Catholic high school will Tweet and discuss why it is important to have a mobile app designed for girls of color.

SOCIALgrlz, LLC is the brainchild of Los Angeles native Marissa Jennings, a Bennett College for Women alumna, whose senior college project has grown into an online social media and education platform specifically targeting African-American girls. The site of this War Room holds a special place in Jennings' heart as her great aunt, Mary Leona Llorens, attended St. Mary's Academy, circa 1925. The SOCIALgrlz website, launched in 2012, allows young girls to share their stories via four platforms: Be Heard!; SOCIALgrlz TXTbook; SOCIALgrlz Bookshelf; and Odessa's Wisdom. Each platform provides African-American girls with opportunities to improve their self-esteem through modern technology by engaging with, and learning from, each other.

The next phase for the company is the development of the mobile application for the Android and Apple platforms. This unique campaign provides an opportunity for everyone to financially Add Your 2 Cents and suggestions as to what topics the application should feature. SOCIALgrlz wants everyone to be involved in the development of this special mobile application. The application includes articles, interviews, a specially designed SOCIALgrlz TXTbook, as well as a column with pearls of wisdom from seasoned African-American women. SOCIALgrlz launched a grassroots crowd-source funding campaign in November to further fund

the development of the mobile application. For more information about the Add Your 2 Cents campaign please visit <http://www.indiegogo.com/projects/socialgrlz> or use 2cents4SOCIALgrlz to see how the community is spreading the word.

About SOCIALgrlz, LLC:

Established in March 2012, SGZ is a Limited Liability Company that provides mobile, Web and publishing services to improve the quality of life for African-American girls utilizing innovative resources for edification and social interaction. For more information, visit www.Socialgrlz.com or call 202-596-8298.

NBCC Catholic Education Foundation Awards Grants to Ten Catholic Schools

Thanks to the generosity of donors, the National Black Catholic Congress Catholic Education Foundation has awarded a total of \$9,500 to 10 Catholic schools. These grants will help sustain Catholic education in and for the Black community.

The following schools received grants this year to advance their fundraising and marketing projects:

- 1) Holy Name of Jesus School, Los Angeles, CA
- 2) Nativity Preparatory School of Wilmington DE
- 3) St. Peter Claver Catholic School, Macon, GA
- 4) Archbishop Lyke School, Cleveland, OH
- 5) St. Joseph the Provider School, Youngstown, OH
- 6) Drexel Neumann Academy, Chester, PA
- 7) Our Mother of Sorrows/ St Ignatius Loyola School, Philadelphia, PA
- 8) St. Raymond of Penafort Catholic School, Philadelphia, PA
- 9) St. Martin de Porres Catholic School, Columbia, SC
- 10) St. Anthony of Padua Catholic School, Greenville, SC

The National Black Catholic Congress (NBCC) was formed to address issues facing Black Catholics in the United States. It is committed to establishing an agenda for the evangelization of African Americans and to improving their spiritual, mental, and physical conditions. The NBCC formed the Catholic Education Foundation in 2010 to focus on sustaining Catholic schools in and for the Black Community. To learn more about the Foundation visit www.nbcccatholiceducationfoundation.org or Like Us on Facebook at [www. https://www.facebook.com/NBCCatholiceducationfoundation](https://www.facebook.com/NBCCatholiceducationfoundation).

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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