

in a
WordTM

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AMAZING GRACE
+Kenya Griffin 1971-2020

Photo by Father James Pawlicki, SVD

Remembering Kenya Griffin and Kenneth Louis

It is with sadness that we mourn the loss of two individuals who contributed so much to African American liturgical worship. Kenya Griffin and Kenneth Louis sadly have gone on to their heavenly rewards.



Kenya Griffin and the Amazing Grace Liturgical Dance Company has graced many an issue of IN A WORD. We met Kenya this wonderful group at many workshops and were very impressed with their dedication to liturgy. The front cover photo of Kenya pays tribute to this talented person who touched many with her gift of dance.

Kenya cherished the opportunity to express herself through movement – ballet, tap, & jazz- and it was there that her creative side took flight. She attended Southwest DeKalb High School, as well as Avondale School for the Performing Arts. Later, at Savannah State College, she further honed her dance skills, studying with Alvin Ailey Dance Company and finally finding her true passion in Modern Dance. Always active with her family at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church, it was an easy transition from Modern to Liturgical dance and it was there that she blossomed and thrived.

In 2000, with the blessing and encouragement of her pastor, Fr. John Adamski, the Amazing Grace Liturgical Dance Company was formed. Today, AGLD is known throughout the country, offering workshops to young and old, and training young dancers to “Dance like David danced”. Kenya and AGLD have given liturgical dance workshops all over the US and



also in the Republic of Kenya – bringing a new passion and level of spirituality to every worshipper they have touched.

Since 2006, she has produced over 15 productions and debuted her first ballet entitled “HOPE”, which was a tribute to those affected by and living with HIV/AIDS – no doubt influenced by her daily contact with the patients and her co-workers at Grady’s Infectious Disease Program (IDP) where she had been employed for the past 10 years as Assistant to the Director. She loved the patients dearly and never missed an opportunity to invite them to AGLD concerts and performances.

In 2013 AIB TV awarded Kenya the William Womack Award for her creativity, powerful choreography, as well as for all the lives she and AGLD have touched through the years. In 2016, AGLD was the first place Rice Awards winner in Music & Arts.

Rest in Peace Kenya. Thank you for blessing us and reminding us of God’s Amazing Grace.



+Kenneth Louis 1953-2019

Kenneth Louis was a talented composer and musician who brought his gifts to enhancing worship in the African American community.

He had spent many years at St. Cyprian-Comforter parish in New York and had brought his gifts to Our Lady of Lourdes parish in Atlanta, Georgia. His music will live on. Kenneth’s expertise and passion for gospel music afforded him the opportunity to travel extensively throughout the United States and Europe.

Mr. Louis served as a music resource person and consultant on African-American sacred music for the Lyke Conferences, National Black Catholic Congress and to many dioceses and congregations throughout the United States. He served as a music resource for the North American Forum on the Catechumenate.

Southern missions begin in Mississippi

The first Divine Word Missionary arrived in the Southern United States to begin work in impoverished, rural Black communities



“Empowered by the Word”

For 125 years, the Society of the Divine Word has served the marginalized in North America. **A new online exhibit, “Empowered by the Word,” marks the anniversary.** “Because of COVID-19 precautions, we are unable to gather for this momentous event,” said Provincial Father Quang Duc Dinh SVD. “Instead, we invite everyone to meet us online through this virtual exhibit.”

On Oct. 15, 1895, Brother Wendelin Meyer SVD landed in New Jersey and began selling Catholic magazines to German-speaking immigrants. Since then, Divine Word Missionaries have been champions of racial equality and trailblazers in religious intercultural living.

“Seminaries, parishes, preaching and teaching, social justice initiatives and ecumenical outreach, hospital and prison chaplaincies—the list of ministries undertaken by members of the Society of the Divine Word throughout the United States, Canada and the Caribbean is endless,” Father Quang said. “For 125 years, Divine Word Missionaries in North America have focused their ministries on serving minorities and the economically disenfranchised.”

Produced by the Divine Word Chicago Province Archives, **the virtual exhibit highlights events from 1895 to the present. Features include the 1920 opening of Mississippi’s Sacred Heart Seminary, the first school specifically for African-American men who wished to study for the priesthood; the foundation of ministries with immigrants in Canada; the welcoming of Vietnamese refugees during the 1970s and ’80s; and the missionaries’ impact in Appalachia’s poorest communities.**

To interact with the exhibit, go to: <https://scalar.usc.edu/works/svd125>.

Founded by St. Arnold Janssen, the Society of the Divine Word has more than 6,000 members worldwide who serve the spiritual and social needs of people in 80 countries. The congregation is the largest Roman Catholic order to focus on missionary work.

in a word or two

TIME FOR A CLEAN-UP!

“It has been said that God dances with the outcasts. If this is true, then who are the “outcasts” today and where is God dancing these days? “Outcasts” today are those who we have cast out. We cast out people who are different because of religion, race, culture, gender, ethnicity, or politics. We even make members of our own families “outcasts.”

The violent insurrection against our democratic government shows the violent effects of creating outcasts. We build walls costing millions of dollars to keep out those we don't like.

If God dances with the “outcasts,” we might be missing the divine dance. If we are not dancing with God's favorite dance partners, it is time for a clean-up. As we move towards the Season of Lent, it time to clear out our intolerant attitudes. It is time to love more. It is time to forgive more. It is time for a clean-up.”

-Deacon Terrel Broussard

comments for Bible study of 6th Sunday of the year B



Amanda Gorman is a name we all recognize. Her poem at the inauguration ceremony was unforgettable. However, as we later found out she is an active member of St. Brigid's Catholic Church in Los Angeles, California. Congratulations to St. Brigid's for being so important to her life.

Shannen Dee Williams in a February 10, 2021 article in the Washington Post wrote;

“Although the media's coverage initially overlooked Gorman's membership at South Central Los Angeles's historically Black St. Brigid Catholic Church, religion reporters rushed to correct their oversight in the ensuing days, with many citing Gorman's faith as further confirmation that the inauguration ceremony was “the most Catholic in history.” Black Catholic women like Amanda Gorman are forgotten prophets of American democracy. Recalling their history is crucial to understanding the history of civil rights.”

To read the article go to:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2021/02/10/black-catholic-women-are-forgotten-prophets-american-democracy/>



Jacqueline E Wilson
+1937-2021

Jacqueline Etheridge Wilson who passed away on January 8 was remembered at her January 18 Funeral Mass for a string of accomplishments on behalf of Black Catholics. The underlying theme of Wilson's memorial service, though, was that all those attributes were rooted in her unfailing faith in God and her willingness to serve in whatever small or large way necessary. The service, which included tributes followed by a Mass, was held at St. Augustine Church in Washington, D.C. for a COVID-limited number of mourners. “She was a teacher/preacher,” said homilist Msgr. Raymond East, the pastor of St. Teresa of Avila Parish in Washington. “She not only taught like Jesus, she preached like Jesus.”

Among her many accomplishments, Wilson was a charter board member of the first Black Catholic Secretariat of the Archdiocese of Washington, serving as executive director of the Office of Black Catholics from 1979-2002. She also was in leadership of the National Association of Black Catholic Administrators from 1974-2002.

“The Black Catholic church owes much to Jackie Wilson,” Msgr. East said. “Whenever anything got formed in the United States for Black Catholics Jackie was right there, pushing behind the scenes, she was a mother giving birth.”

Cardinal Gregory, in concluding the funeral Mass, said although Wilson retired before he came to the Archdiocese of Washington as the archbishop in 2019, their paths had crossed regularly over the years. “The whole church owes an incredible debt to Jackie,” he said. The cardinal noted that her funeral might have been held in many parishes in the archdiocese that could claim “she was ours.” But, he said, “she was all of ours.” *For more details on her remarkable life go to:*

<http://www.inaword.com/news.html>

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, Florida and Arkansas.

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