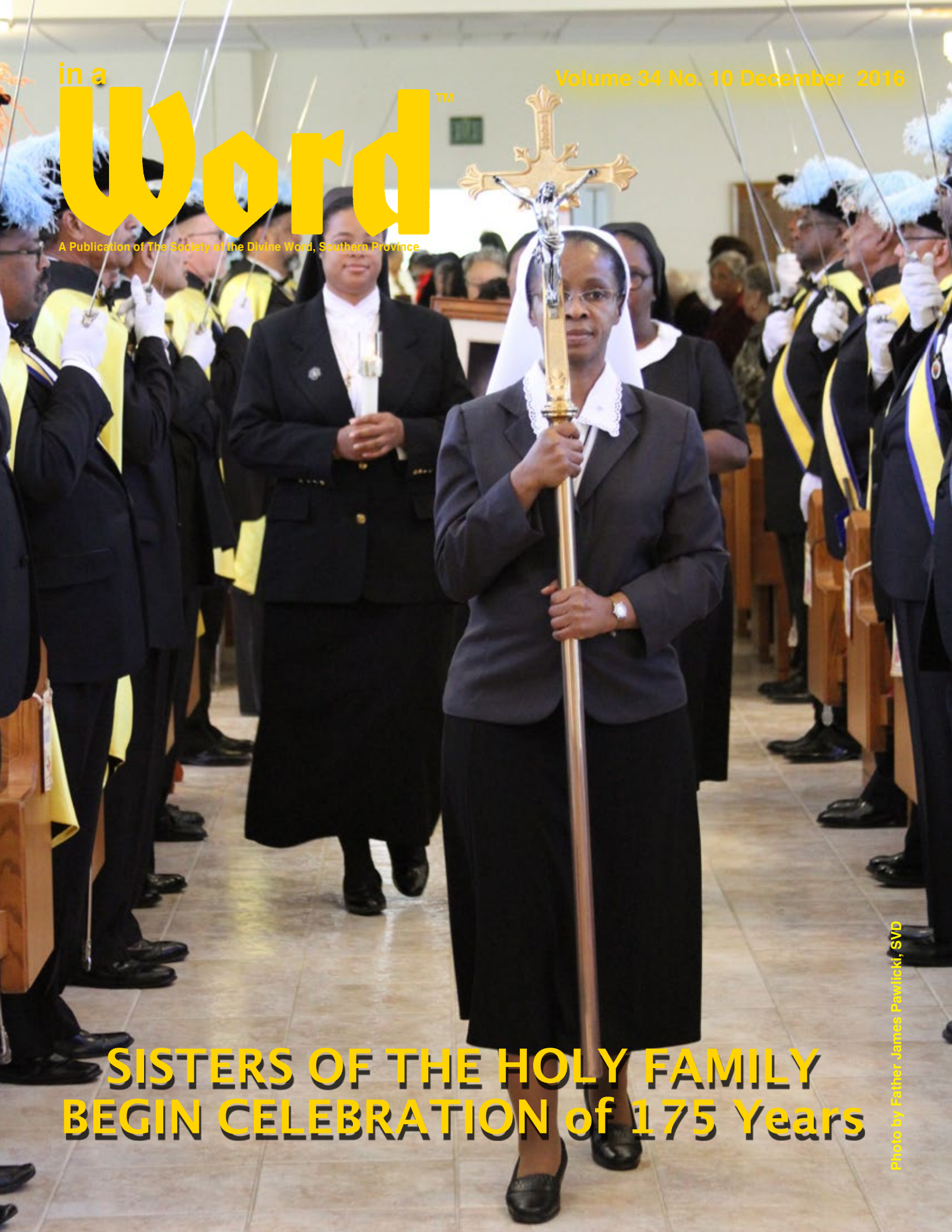


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# Word™

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## SISTERS OF THE HOLY FAMILY BEGIN CELEBRATION of 175 Years

Photo by Father James Pawlicki, SVD



# SISTERS OF THE HOLY FAMILY BEGIN CELEBRATION OF 175 YEARS

*(The following remarks were delivered by Sister Leona Bruner, SSF, at a Mass of Thanksgiving as the Sisters of the Holy Family began celebrating 175 years of their founding)*

This morning we celebrate two significant events: Mass honoring our foundress, Venerable Henriette Delille, and the opening of our year-long celebration of the 175th anniversary of our congregation and the legacy of Venerable Henriette Delille.

Twenty-eight years ago, Henriette was accepted as a candidate for sainthood by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome. She became the first U. S. native born African American whose cause for canonization has been officially opened by the Catholic Church.



**Servant of God**, the first step to canonization, was the name given to her. At this time Henriette's life, virtues, and reputation of sanctity had to be researched, examined, and accepted by historians, theologians, and members of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome. An Archdiocesan Inquiry was also held. Our respon-

sibility was to tell her story, promote devotion to her, and to accept and record favors.

Seventeen years later, over 1,000 pages of documents, boxed and sealed during a special Mass, were shipped to Rome. After five years of examination and approval of these documents, Pope Benedict XVI on March 27, 2010, declared Henriette **Venerable**, the second stage of canonization. For six years we have been praying and waiting for an authenticated miracle since a miracle is needed for **Beatification**, the third stage of canonization.

We had a possible 13 alleged miracles to choose from. Our Roman postulator, Dr. Ambrosi, thought that the healing of a four-year-old girl, in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, whose major organs had shut down and doctors said that there was nothing more they could do, healed rather quickly when family, friends, the Sisters, students, and many more joined in prayer through Henriette Delille's intercession. Not only did she get well, but continues in good health as a happy student in graduate school. Unfortunately, not all the doctors in the Roman investigation saw this as an accepted alleged miracle. They are waiting for more evidence. The Postulator has not given up on this

cure. However, there is a second alleged miracle that is being investigated now in Little Rock, Arkansas. This one involves a college student who became seriously ill. Her major organs shut down and the doctors predicted her death. Prayers through the intercession of Henriette Delille were being offered by the family, the Sisters, and friends. Her mother said that she prayed to Henriette constantly from the beginning to the end. The young student was healed, graduated from college, and is doing very well. As soon as the inquiry is completed, the doctors, in Rome, will study the medical records. This could be the authenticated miracle we need for Beatification. We will need a second miracle for Canonization.

What are we doing now? We continue to pray as a congregation. We ask and encourage others to pray with us. We continue to spread devotion to Henriette by using the media, our speakers' bureau, and establishing chapters of **Friends of Henriette Delille**, nationally and internationally. We hope, pray and wait for the day when we can say **Blessed Henriette** and then **Saint Henriette**.

The second event we celebrate today is the opening of the year-long celebration of the 175th anniversary of the Sisters of the Holy Family and the legacy of Venerable Henriette Delille.

It is a miracle in itself that the Sisters of the Holy Family were officially founded in New Orleans before the Emancipation Proclamation in 1842, even though Henriette Delille, Juliette Gaudin and Josephine Charles began several years before doing their good works among the poor and the slaves.



Their first Rule was written in 1836 when they had formed a pious group of women not yet living under the same roof known as the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Sisters were dedicated to caring for the sick, assisting the poor and instructing the ignorant. Their motto was "One heart, one soul" based on the Acts of the Apostles (4: 34) and the rule of St. Augustine. **This maxim and dedicated service to the sick, poor and marginalized remain the center of the lives of the Sisters of the Holy Family today.**

We welcome you to celebrate with us today and throughout the year.



**BRIEF HISTORY OF THE  
SISTERS OF THE HOLY FAMILY**

Twenty years before the Civil War of the United States, and before it was legal for such a Congregation to exist, the Sisters of the Holy Family were founded in New Orleans, Louisiana by Henriette Delille, a free woman of color. Co-foundresses of this religious community of African-American women were Juliette Gaudin and Josephine Charles. Destined by the mores of the time to live a life of ease in the tradition of their female ancestors, Henriette, Juliette, and Josephine dared to break away from that pattern of life. Instead, these women chose to follow God's call. In following Him, they taught slaves, cared for the elderly, and shared what they had with the poor and the needy. For over 170 years, the Sisters of the Holy Family, in the spirit of their foundresses and early predecessors, have continued to the youth, the elderly, and the needy members of society. The Sisters have not only served the New Orleans community, but many people throughout cities in Louisiana; Texas, California, in Washington, D.C., Oklahoma, Alabama, Florida, Belize, Panama Central America; and Benin City, Nigeria, Africa.

During the history of the community, numerous noteworthy events have been documented. On November 21, 1842, the community was established. In 1843, catechism classes were

conducted for adults and children. In 1847, a group of free men and free women color formed the Society of the Holy Family to give the Sisters moral and financial support. On October 15, 1852, Henriette, Juliette, and Josephine pronounced first vows in St. Augustine Church. When children were left homeless by the pestilence in 1853, Sisters cared for the orphans. Thus, in 1892, the St. John Berchmans' Orphanage was dedicated.

The Sisters cared for the sick during the yellow fever epidemic in New Orleans in 1897. The Sisters arrived in Stan Creek, British Honduras on Palm Sunday in 1898. For \$10 an acre, Mother Austin Jones purchased 123 acres of land in the Gentilly area. This 1906 purchase formed the cornerstone for the ministries at St. Mary's Academy, St. Paul the Apostle Church and School, the House of the Holy Family, Delille Inn, Lafon Day Care Center, Lafon Nursing Facility of the Holy Family, and the present Motherhouse. In 1988 Henriette Delille's Cause for canonization was opened.

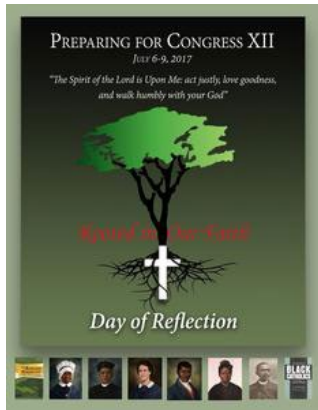
**The Sisters have spent over 170 years of loving, caring, and sharing with and for the people of God, for their own sanctification, spreading the word of God, and for improving the life of the people they serve.**

The Sisters of the Holy Family praise and thank God for their years of service and ask His blessings for the continuance of mission.



*Photos on this page, previous page, and front cover are from the 175th Anniversary Mass*

# in a word or two



The Twelfth National Black Catholic Congress will be held in Orlando, Florida from Thursday, July 6, 2017 to Sunday, July 9, 2017. The theme for this Congress is, *"The Spirit of the Lord is Upon Me: act justly, love goodness, and walk humbly with your God."* Activities for Congress will embrace: Spiritual Growth, Historical Awareness, Social Justice Issues, Human Life and Human Dignity topics,

Marriage and Family Life Connections, Youth and Young Adults Engagement. For more information, contact the NBCC office at 410-547-8496 or email [nbcc@nbcccongress.org](mailto:nbcc@nbcccongress.org).

The Archdiocese of New Orleans sponsors a day of service for the Martin Luther King holiday called **"DAY ON NOT OFF"**. Begun by Ansel Augustine and the office for Black Catholics in the Archdiocese of New Orleans the day of service is a great way to remember this important holiday. Hopefully other Dioceses could imitate this endeavor. There is still time until January 16, 2017!!

Life's most persistent and urgent question is, **"What are you doing for others?"**  
-Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

**DAY ON NOT OFF**  
MLK DAY OF SERVICE  
MONDAY  
JANUARY 16, 2017

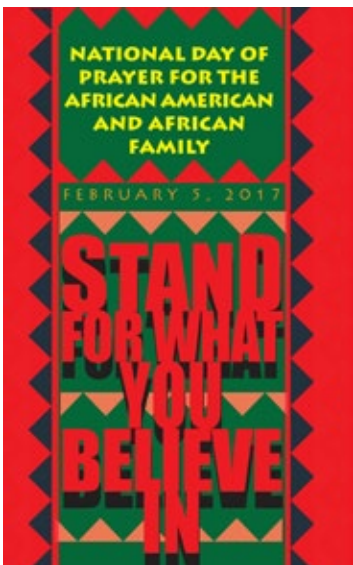
What is the MLK Day On / Not Off of Service? It's an annual day of volunteering in our community! The day begins with a prayer service at each High School in New Orleans with Archbishop Gregory Aymond. Supervised volunteer groups will be assigned to community projects throughout the Archdiocese of New Orleans. Projects include planting seedlings, restoring exterior light bulbs with energy efficient light bulbs, painting and sprucing up homes and schools.

Who can participate? High school student groups, youth groups, women's groups, families, organizations and individuals are encouraged to take part. All participating groups must attend with an adult supervisor. All groups must be registered in advance.

How do you register? To register as an individual, family, or group and for more information contact the Office of Black Catholic Ministries, (504) 561-4207, email [bcatholic@no.org](mailto:bcatholic@no.org).

Are you a site or community organization in need of volunteers? We are searching for additional work sites for this day of service! If you have a work project to be done, contact Diocese Ministry of Volunteer Service, Catholic Charities at (504) 370-6163.

The MLK Day of Service is a collaboration of Office of Black Catholic Ministries, Office of Social Services, Office of Catholic Schools, Office of Religious Education, Office of Faith & Young Adult Ministry and Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New Orleans.



Parishes should start preparations for the National Day of Prayer on February 3, 2017 for the African American and African Family. The National Day of Prayer for the African American and African Family was created by Fr. James Goode, OFM in 1989. It is a day set aside to give special thanks to God for our families and place our cares in the arms of Jesus.

For helpful materials go to [solidgroundministry.org](http://solidgroundministry.org) More information in the next issue of **IN A WORD**

## NOVENA TO THE HOLY FAMILY (December 21-29, 2016)

O most loving Jesus, Who by Your awe-inspiring and beautiful virtues of humility, obedience, poverty, modesty, charity, patience and gentleness, did bless with peace and happiness the family you did choose on earth. In your mercy look down upon this household, humble in your presence and asking for your mercy. Remember that this family belongs to you; for to you we have in a special way dedicated and devoted ourselves. Look upon us in your loving kindness; preserve us from danger; give us help in time of need, and grant us the grace to persevere to the end in the imitation of Your Holy Family; that having revered You and loved You faithfully on earth, we may bless and praise You eternally in heaven.

O Mary, most sweet Mother, we turn to you to intercede for us, knowing that your Divine Son will hear your prayers.

And do you, O venerable, St. Joseph, be our mediator, and offer, by the hands of Mary, our prayers to Jesus. Amen.

Venerable Henriette Delille, pray for us that we may be a holy family.

Here mention your petitions for this novena.

1 Our Father ... 1 Hail Mary... 1 Glory Be



**Sisters of the Holy Family**

175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

1842-2017

[www.sistersoftheholysfamily.com](http://www.sistersoftheholysfamily.com)

**IN A WORD**  
**MERRY**  
**CHRISTMAS!**  
*to all*

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.

IN A WORD is a publication of The Society of the Divine Word's Media Production Center. Rev. James Pawlicki, S.V.D., Director and Editor; Cathy Green-Miner, office manager; Father Brendan Murphy, SVD consultant.

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Web page can be found at <http://www.inaword.com>