

Congress X Welcoming
by
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Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago, Illinois
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Thank you... Bishop Ricard:

Good afternoon, brothers and sisters in Christ, with your bishops, their excellencies who are with us, your parish priests and deacons, men and women of consecrated life and fellow Catholics from around the country and beyond who are with us these days. I am Bishop Joseph Perry, auxiliary Bishop of Chicago and chairman of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee for African American Catholics.

It is my privilege to officially call to order *Black Catholic Congress number 10!*

If only Daniel Rudd and Father Augustus Tolton could see us now! We share the mission of those first Congress planners – their vision for the life and vitality of the church in the African American community, from the very first Congress of 1889 unto this year 2007 Congresses have become the primordial assembly of our community by the grace and mercy of God!

Congress IX gave us eight principles to explore and implement for life in our parishes and communities in order to nurture all things black and Catholic. We have, for the last five years, been pondering, researching and implementing these for the good of the whole Church, matters connected with: *Spirituality, Parish Life, Youth and Young Adults, Racism, Catholic Education, Africa, HIV/AIDS, and Social Justice*. Congress X wishes to report on these eight principles through the prism of the 7 sacraments which distinguish us as Catholic Christians. The principles, therefore, are not simply a charter of social and political survival. The principles arise out of our baptism and anointing – our birthright in the Roman Catholic Church. These principles must improve us essentially as Catholic Christians.

Whereas Scripture gives us the words of Jesus recalled by his closest disciples for our hearing and adoption. The Sacraments are the gestures and the touch of Jesus on our bodies in his healing, consoling and enlivening and commissioning of us anointed in friendship with him through baptism. The Sacraments give empowerment to our 8

principles of implementation for truly Catholic evangelization. These 7 sacred signs are benchmarks of our pride as African American Catholics; the articulation of our uniqueness as Christians and instruments of our holiness.

Sacraments are not mere pageants or performances or concerts. Sacraments insure our graced encounter with Jesus Christ each in their own way. Something takes place in each Sacrament that only God can do resulting in our sharing life with God and friendship with the redeemer Jesus Christ while we receive strength for the journey. We trust that renewed excitement in each of us can be engendered by the presentations of these days. Both Scripture and Sacrament in the Catholic imagination, from the very beginning of Christianity, give us experience of the whole Christ until He comes back to take us with him.

In other words, ours is an altar and a pulpit!

We have something special, holy and authentic. This means we are responsible for handling it with faith, care and the authenticity of our lives. We are required to teach others and bring them to the faith of Christ's Church.

- Invite Bishop Kmiec, the bishop of Buffalo for some welcoming remarks:
- Followed by opening prayer

Let us pray:

O God, light of truth and of kindness, our Lord and Creator. We cannot start the proceedings of this Congress without directing to you our call and praise.

We call for your guidance, that you direct us from beginning to end and help us reach with joy the best results. Give us the opportunity to gain from this assembly increased unity and friendship. Under your divine gaze, ever watchful, we ask you to bless our ideas and the projects we put into action.

When we long for life without suffering or work without difficulty, teach us that all progress is but strain and pain, that difficulties produce dividends in grace and goodness and

character. Grant us the wisdom to take things as they are and make them what they ought to be, for the good of your Church, for the community and for the world.

May all we do here these days develop in partnership with your Son for the greater glory of your Name and for our true benefit to the good of the Church..

Bless abundantly, O God, all who are present here with us and all the tasks we will accomplish. We pray through Christ our Lord,

Amen!