PASTORAL OBJECTIVES for the BLACK APOSTOLATE

Authentically Black and Truly Catholic

Diocese of Austin
Thursday, March 7, 2019
Saints Perpetua and Felicity, Martyrs

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Saturday of the Octave of Easter in 2018, Black Catholics throughout the Diocese of Austin gathered together to pray and reflect on the pastoral priorities and objectives of the black apostolate. Focused on “The Spirit of the Lord is Upon Me: Act justly, love goodness, and walk humbly with your God,” Msgr. Edward B. Branch of Atlanta facilitated discussions about social issues, human dignity, marriage and family life, youth and young adults, and opportunities for spiritual growth.

Using the National Black Catholic Congress Pastoral Plan of Action and Encounter that Leads to Transformation to guide the apostolate’s unique pastoral planning for the next five years, we explained the role of the Spirit in the work of pastoral planning, the work of the members identifying the most relevant aspects of each plan, and the work of salvation. Whether in the ministerial priesthood or the common priesthood of the faithful, “There is no vacation from our vocation!”

We remind Catholics who originated from the African diaspora, “Black Catholics are not part of the Church; you ARE the Church. Don’t ever lose sight of the fact that you are the Church, just the way you are!” The gifts of blacks contribute to building up the whole Church.

May these pastoral priorities and objectives of the black apostolate in the Diocese of Austin aid in the work of evangelization, formation, and spiritual growth.

Most Reverend Joe S. Vásquez
Bishop of Austin

F. DeKarlos Blackmon, OblSB
Director of Life, Charity, and Justice

The witness of Blacks, sharing our gifts within the Church, is a confirmation of the expression “Authentically Black and Truly Catholic”
Most Reverend Joe S. Vásquez
Bishop of Austin
The unity of the Church is not uniformity, but an organic blending of legitimate diversities. It is the reality of many members joined in a single body, the one Body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 12:12). Therefore the Church of the Third Millennium will need to encourage all the baptized and confirmed to be aware of their active responsibility in the Church’s life. Together with the ordained ministry, other ministries, whether formally instituted or simply recognized, can flourish for the good of the whole community, sustaining it in all its many needs: from catechesis to liturgy, from education of the young to the widest array of charitable works.

St. John Paul II
At the Close of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000
Spirituality and the Saints

To create more opportunities to increase awareness of black saints in the life of the church

Parishes and schools are encouraged to contact the diocesan offices of Black Ministry and Catechesis for resources to increase the knowledge of black saints.

Leadership in the Church

To create opportunities to develop existing leaders and invite parishioners to assume leadership positions in parochial ministry

Pastors and parishes are encouraged to research opportunities for leadership training and provide access to emerging leaders within parochial communities. Affirming and celebrating lay leadership is an essential component of fostering full stewardship.

Addressing Social Justice Issues

To identify and eradicate racism, increase prison ministry, and provide support for those experiencing domestic violence in communities

Racism results when a person judges people of other races or ethnicities as inferior, failing to acknowledge the inherent dignity of each human person. Parishes are encouraged to develop a corporate consciousness and to create opportunities for dialogue about the evil of racism in our communities.

The number of inmates of color is grossly disproportionate in prisons and detention centers. The faithful are encouraged to participate in
prison ministry and outreach. More information is available from the Office of Criminal (Restorative) Justice.

Communities are encouraged to provide education and support for people experiencing domestic violence by placing information about domestic violence where it can be accessed discreetly. Homilists should address domestic violence within the framework of the sanctity of life.

Catechesis and Evangelization

To develop a comprehensive Afrocentric formation program, to integrate Catholic Social Teaching, and evangelize black people

Parishes are encouraged to include materials and models designed to reach black youth in formation programs, which should incorporate models of effective digital learning, black saints, and religious figures. Ongoing parish activities should integrate and apply Catholic Social Teaching, infusing the dignity of human life within the framework of catechesis. Parishes are encouraged to provide missions and revivals, picnics and family days, and various means of media to effect a two-by-two ministry to evangelize communities.

Support Catholic Schools

To create opportunities for people to receive a Catholic education by supporting Catholic schools within diocese

Communities are encouraged to research the successful models of sustainability of Catholic schools for urban communities,
understanding the history and importance of Catholic Schools in the African American community. The stories of Sister Thea Bowman, Archbishop Wilton Gregory, and other black Catholics who converted to Catholicism from their experiences in Catholic Schools should be lifted up as examples of the evangelization done through Catholic education.

Vocations

To promote vocations to the priesthood, diaconate, and consecrated life among black people and to remove barriers where they exist

Parishes are encouraged to promote and support black Catholic vocations through youth vocations outreach using social media to promote God’s call to ministry at the parish and diocesan levels. In developing an Afrocentric awareness for all clergy and seminarians, pastors are encouraged to host periodic round table discussions with parishioners.

Youth Ministry

To develop a spiritual formation strategies that foster encounter, and support the family as the Domestic Church

Communities should address the urgent issue of disengaged black youth in parishes and the diocese by hosting youth listening sessions
where youth will be able to speak to pastors and pastoral councils about their needs. Communities should investigate local, regional, and national opportunities for the development of black youth and young adults.

**Spiritual Formation That Leads To Encounter**

*To develop a spiritual formation strategies that foster encounter, and support the family as the Domestic Church*

In keeping with the diocesan Pastoral Plan, *Encounter that Leads to Transformation*, pastors and parish leaders should attract, engage, and inspire young people to deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ and the teachings of the church. This can be facilitated by creating opportunities for young people to become more involved with parochial ministries and diocesan programs, which will lead to stronger participation in parish life and external Christian witness. Families must be encouraged to participate actively in the catechetical and faith development of their children, as they are the Domestic Church.

**Creating Missionary Disciples**

*To develop a culture of ministry that creates missionary disciples*

In keeping with the diocesan Pastoral Plan, pastors and parishes are encouraged to provide comprehensive spiritual formation, leadership,
and professional development for lay ministers. The church can never be without a dedicated laity, so the need to increase the number of laity who are properly formed to serve in parishes, schools, Catholic entities, and other ministries is preeminent.

**Christian Witness and Outreach**

*To strengthen Christian witness and outreach*

In keeping with the diocesan Pastoral Plan, parishes are encouraged to provide formation opportunities for Catholics on how to evangelize and give witness to their faith, in an effort to increase the number of non-practicing Catholics returning to a more regular practice of the faith. In addition, sacred ministers should advocate, support, and nurture a greater sensitivity and knowledge of intercultural competency for all pastoral ministries by enabling people to participate in opportunities for intercultural competency.
Black Ministry provides support to all matters related to the promotion of continued integration of African American Catholics into parish and community life, and activities related to the spiritual, educational and societal well-being of Catholics of African descent. Social Concerns serves as a central diocesan resource for social justice education, and advocacy in support of poor and vulnerable persons and communities. Social Concerns promotes awareness of Catholic social teaching, and opportunities to live the Baptismal call to love God and neighbor. While each of these offices are supported by the the Catholic Services Appeal, Black Ministry is also supported by the National Black and Indian Mission Office.