

# AFRICENTRIC | Matters that matter

**By Therese Wilson Favors**

As we walk into this new year, new challenges await us. Sometimes when faced with looming challenges, the bountiful blessings given by God often seem to vanish or grow small in our psych  . I would like to share some thoughts on both the challenges and the blessings as “matters that matter.”

First and foremost is the challenge that the economy, and the extreme uneasiness of its politics bearing down on our families, communities and our nation. As always when economic restraints flourish, African-Americans feel the blunt edge and impact. In the executive summary from the Pew Research Center titled, “Wealth Gaps Rise to Record Highs Between Whites, Blacks and Hispanics,” unsettling and disturbing news is reported:

“The median wealth of white households is 20 times that of black households and 18 times that of Hispanic households, according to Pew Research center data from 2009. These lopsided wealth ratios are the largest since the government began publishing such data a quarter of a century ago and roughly twice the size of the ratios that prevailed between these three groups for the two decades prior to the Great Recession that ended in 2009.”

Truly this is of grave concern. Black families are most impacted by economics, which precipitates challenges regarding health care, education and housing. Ralph E. Moore has it right when he states, “Jobs are still the best anti-poverty program America has to offer everyday people.” However, our past as a people has taught us much and given us other weapons to strengthen us.

The pulling together of our families in the spirit of kujichagulia (self-determination), ujima (us helping us), ujamaa (pulling together financial resources) and imani-faith is a way to combat such challenges. What matters most is that we stick together, pray together and work together. Thus the reason and blessing of initiating the first Sunday of Black History Month as a time for African-American and African Catholics

to come together in prayer, participate in the Eucharist, to sit together at meal time and to discuss the power and blessing of “familyhood”. See the web site of National Black Catholics for Life ([blackcatholicsforlife.org](http://blackcatholicsforlife.org)) for some inspiration and direction under the theme “Thank God We Are Not Empty-Handed.”

Our life within the church of Baltimore is another “matter that matters.” The issues surrounding Parish Planning as well as building leadership within the church are foremost in the hearts and minds of African-American Catholics. The sting of Catholic school closings in our communities still burns. Yet, we are aware that change is before us. Clearly it is evident that we are not able to stop such change but we are equipped and prayerfully endowed to make the process better by raising our voice, pursuing strategies and insights as well as commitment to construct the “future building process.”

The Board of African American Catholic Ministries has been active in pursuing the abovementioned initiatives as “matters that matter” as discussed during the “Meet Me On The Mountaintop” Forum held last April and related follow-up meetings. It is an ongoing conversation joined by our concern of sharing resources among parishes as well as building leadership within our youth and raising vocations. Black deacons are holding conversations and building strategies to address vocations and youth leadership. Our Harambee Youth Organization will hold a reunion during the Mother Mary Lange Awards Banquet Feb. 10, as a means of inviting our young adults to take a more active role in leadership, on both the local level here in this archdiocese as well as during the National Black Catholic Congress in Indianapolis in July.

Another “matter that matters” is heating up our prayerful and educational efforts toward the canonization of Oblate Sister of Providence Mother Mary Lange. This year will mark the 130th anniversary of her death. She is an inspiration to not only African American Catholics in the United States but for all people of God here and worldwide. Her story is a blessing. Join us in prayer commemorating her death on Sunday, Feb. 6, at 2 p.m., at the Motherhouse of the Oblate Sisters of Providence.

*My next articles will continue this discussion of “matters that matter.”*

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