

Africentric: St. Frances honoring Bill and Camille Cosby

By Deacon Curtis Turner

Welcome home, Dr. Camille Cosby.

Early in my career as a secondary school administrator, I struggled to measure the impact of my efforts. I wanted to know if I was doing God's will with the students entrusted to my care. Frankly, every objective instrument known to me proved to be inadequate in assessing my effectiveness as a teacher. Standardized test scores, improved or not, did not tell the whole story. Failure and passage rates, acceptances to colleges, disciplinary records all failed to answer the following question fully: Is my school making a difference?

Finally, I called an experienced and wise administrator whom I considered a mentor. I called him following a perceived failure on my part. I wanted to know if I was being too hard on myself and my faculty or if there was a more effective way to gauge our success as educators. I presented him with the litany of measures I had considered and he eventually cut me off.

"Curtis," he said to me, "all you want as a teacher is to be walking somewhere in public and have one of your students be glad to see you. If that happens, if they recognize you and want to say hello, you have been a success."

From the moment I began working for the Oblate Sisters of Providence as the principal of St. Frances Academy in Baltimore, that standard of measure given to me by my mentor has always been met or exceeded. Furthermore, it is a standard of measure that more perfectly assesses the effectiveness of a quality Catholic education. For more than 180 years, young people have been educated by Mother Mary Lange, her sisters, her associates and her teachers. And, in addition to their test scores, college acceptances, etc., our alumni have almost always been "glad to see us."

On April 20, the Oblate Sisters of Providence will take the opportunity to thank one such former student. St. Frances Academy will name its \$6 million community center in honor of Dr. Camille Cosby and her husband, Dr. Bill Cosby.

Camille Cosby was educated by the Oblate Sisters of Providence while she was a young girl growing up in Washington, D.C. I am quite sure that through the secular academic measures of success I mentioned earlier, the positive impact of the Oblate Sisters on her success is apparent. She, like countless others educated by the Oblate Sisters, is proudly claimed by them as one of their own. Her academic and professional accomplishments speak volumes about her Oblate education. However,

by the measure given by my mentor, the influence of the Oblate Sisters is beyond appraisal. It is for this reason that Camille Cosby and her husband have been passionate about their support of the Oblate Sisters of Providence and their work at St. Frances Academy.

Needless to say, when she comes home to us on April 20, we will be glad to see her too.

Deacon Turner is principal of St. Frances Academy and non-resident associate of the Oblate Sisters of Providence.

Read about Bill Cosby's 2008 appearance at St. Ambrose in Park Heights.