

First African-American priest takes step toward sainthood



[Father Augustus Tolton](#), the first African-American priest, took a step closer to sainthood this week when Chicago Cardinal Francis George announced that the priest's sainthood cause has been introduced in the Archdiocese of Chicago. According to an archdiocesan press release, the cardinal will appoint a historical commission to assemble the facts about Father Tolton's heroic virtues.

Some time after 1889, Father Tolton made a speaking appearance in Baltimore at the invitation of Cardinal James Gibbons. In 1899, Father Tolton [celebrated a Mass](#) with Cardinal Gibbons during the Black Catholic Lay Congress in Washington, D.C.

ABC7 in Chicago has more on Father Tolton's sainthood cause:

The cause for the beatification and canonization of Fr. Augustus Tolton of Illinois is moving forward.

On Thursday, the Archdiocese of Chicago began a process that could lead to sainthood for Father Tolton. At the St. James Chapel at the Quigley Seminary, a prayer service was held and the decrees were signed to examine the priest's life, virtues and reputation of holiness.

"A man, a priest, a Christian who somehow survived all of that and remained loyal to his people, a devoted priest," said Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Perry of Chicago and postulator for Fr. Tolton's cause for sainthood.

“It is significant because the Catholic Church in this moment is recognizing the fact that a man, the descendant of slaves, his life is a testament of holiness, is a testament of perseverance,” said Vanessa White, Catholic Theological Union.

White says they need to show proof that Fr. Tolton was responsible for miracles and it can take years.

Tolton, born the son of slaves in Missouri, studied for the priesthood in Rome because no American seminary would accept him.

More [here](#), including a video.