

# Mass for Mother Lange celebrates her sainthood cause

To know the background of Mother Mary Lange was to appreciate the atmosphere May 8 at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Baltimore, where Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien led a Mass to pray for her sainthood.

A native of Haiti, Mother Lange in the early 19th century was a co-foundress of the Oblate Sisters of Providence, the first order established by women of African descent.

The Oblate Sisters, the Mother Mary Lange Guild and the Knights of Peter Claver Auxiliary Court 323 were among the many worshipers at the basilica, where Archbishop O'Brien referenced the Book of Revelation and "the demolition of walls built by prejudice and intolerance."

Archbishop O'Brien described her history and commitment to the Catholic faith, children, families and God

"Mother Lange's life is so relevant for contemporary times and circumstances," he said. "Her Haitian family took refuge in Cuba during political turmoil. At age 29 she sought peace and security in the United States, settling here in Baltimore, an immigrant and refugee, but well educated and of some financial means.

"A black woman in a slave state," he continued, "the heart of Elizabeth Lange went out to many refugee children of color needing education. With a handful of collaborators, she spent all her resources in housing and educating the young."

Mother Lange opened what is known today as St. Frances Academy.

The archbishop also referenced the origin of her order.

"Incalculable are the number of poor and minority, young and old, who have been educated, counseled, housed and fed by our Oblate Sisters of Providence from then,

1829, to now, and in the face of unprecedented and unimaginable obstacles even to this day.

“Their trust,” he continued, “in Divine Providence has never wavered, for they continue to be inspired by, and to inspire others, by that vision of the heavenly Jerusalem come down from heaven where, with their witness and ministry, the Lord is breaking down the barriers that separate, and making all things new.”

In the spirit of Mother’s Day, the archbishop celebrated and encouraged Catholic women and mothers of today to walk in Mother Lange’s footsteps.

“It is fitting that on this Mother’s Day, we recall the extraordinary love of Mother Mary Lange and in praying for those high honors for her that only our Church can bestow, pray for all our mothers present who welcome the love of God into their hearts, and into their homes.”