

# New All Saints Mass kicks off Black Catholic History Month

Black Catholic History Month in the Archdiocese of Baltimore began with a Mass honoring the birthday of Josephite Father Charles Randolph Uncles, the first black Catholic priest ordained in America.

The Nov. 5 celebration was held at New All Saints Parish in Liberty Heights. It began with everyone singing “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” as attendees, including a number of black Catholics from other parishes were told by Auxiliary Bishop Denis J. Madden to remember the past while looking ahead to the future.

During the month of November, the Catholic Church will bring to the forefront the rich tradition of black Catholics. There are currently more than 200 million people of African descent in the Catholic Church, with 3 million of them here in the United States. That number includes 250 priests, 75 seminarians, 450 deacons, 400 religious women, 50 religious brothers and 798 black parishes.

During his homily, Bishop Madden likened Father Uncles’ journey to the priesthood to those in the crowd living their everyday lives. Referring to racism as a “dream thief,” Bishop Madden said that Father Uncles being solidly grounded and anchored in his faith made it difficult to shake him, something not too dissimilar to what blacks have experienced in America.

“I want to remind you,” Bishop Madden said, “that God does not forget the many times when you, as black Catholics, held on to His unchanging hand when the going got rough and the hills became hard to climb. God does not forget your steadfast love and loyalty despite the raging waters of evil that try to drown you.”

Bishop Madden went on to comment on what he called the “great spirit of the black community,” stating that he has always enjoyed the faithfulness of black Catholics while also being in awe of it.

“Looking back on the history of this country, they’ve gone through some hard times,” he said. “I feel that they are an outstanding example of being faithful to the

Gospel. Even during the roughest of times, they still find something to laugh and smile about.”

Other events scheduled to take place over the course of the month are the Festival of Sacred Songs with the Oblate Sisters of Providence and the Mother Lange Guild-Board of Directors at Our Lady of Mount Providence Convent Nov. 12, and the Black Catholic History Pilgrimage and Tour to St. Mary’s County Nov. 19.