

Walking tall To Congress XI

By Therese Wilson Favors

In January 1889, the very first Colored Catholic Congress was held in Washington, D.C. The visionary of the Congress movement, Daniel A. Rudd, invited His Eminence, Cardinal James Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore, to offer Mass and address the assembly. Cardinal Gibbons graciously accepted and shared a message which recognized the gravity of the moment.

“This day will mark an era in the history of the Colored Catholics of America,” Cardinal Gibbons shared. “This is the first time they have assembled, and I have no doubt that many good results will follow from this congress. It will strengthen you and give additional force to your convictions. In union there is strength. This is true in mercantile, social and religious life. Take a single drop of water, how powerless it is. Add to it millions of other drops, and what a force you have. Look at the father of waters, the mighty Mississippi, as it rolls from its source in the north down to the gulf.”

Using Cardinal Gibbons’ thoughts, one concludes that many drops of water make up the Mississippi and give it force to flow from north to south. Like the Mississippi, many voices, visions and actions of black Catholics, from the north to the south and from the west to the east, have come together, working for good results since this first congress in 1889.

Today, African Americans find themselves in this new time, anchored in great hope remembering these words of Cardinal Gibbons and the dream of Daniel Rudd. Rudd had a deep love for God and an abiding and committed dedication to the church. He

saw the Catholic Church as a vehicle that could raise our people out of poverty, and push the world to respect the equality of African Americans. In the church's efforts of improving the quality of life with and for blacks, Rudd concluded that morally the church would be elevated to its authentic Catholic teaching. Rudd's thinking captured the notion that people of color become agents toward the salvation of the church and not merely objects of challenge in the church.

The Archdiocese of Baltimore, led by Bishop Denis J. Madden and parish leaders, will walk tall at the 11th National Black Catholic Congress (NBCC) in Indianapolis July 19-21. The agenda is to complete some unfinished business of Daniel Rudd and to discuss effective pastoral strategies to enhance evangelization in the black community.

The Office and Board of African American Catholic Ministries are proud to sponsor four young adults to the Congress. They were selected during the Day of Reflection in preparation for the NBCC.

Rachel L. Black and Raynard Pinckney were baptized at St. Veronica Parish in Cherry Hill and remain very active.

Black is the daughter of Cecilia Mayo and Benjamin Black. She has achieved two degrees in physics, completing undergraduate studies at Morgan State University and recently achieving a master's degree from Hampton (Va.) State University. In September, she will join the faculty at the Institute of Notre Dame, teaching physics.

Pinckney serves as the youth minister at St. Veronica and has completed academic degrees in criminal justice from Baltimore City Community College and the University of Baltimore. In September, Raynard will enter Loyola University Maryland, striving for a master's degree in theology. His parents are Teresa and Raynard Pinckney.

James Conway, from St. Wenceslaus in Baltimore, is active as a eucharistic minister and lector, and serves in the choir. His hope in attending the Congress is to be inspired with new ideas to bring back to his church family so that their parish can be stronger in evangelizing and become more relevant in its mission. He is the son of Bridget Holley and Thomas Conway.

Rudy Dehaney, a senior at Morgan State University, is a math major. Recently he suggested to the Board of African American Ministries his willingness to organize a survey instrument similar to the National Black Catholic Survey to gauge the engagement of black Catholics in Baltimore. Dehaney is a parishioner of Blessed Sacrament Church in Baltimore, and is the son of Megan Godfrey and Rudolph Dehaney.

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