

When faith, unity prevail

In 1889 Daniel Rudd and delegates of the very first Black Catholic Congress raised concern regarding the need for Catholic education of black youths. Delegates made a motion on the floor to facilitate action to achieve this goal. Today, the sons and daughters of the National Black Catholic Congress movement active in the Archdiocese of Baltimore, through the Office and Board of African American Catholic Ministries, picked up this cause by establishing a Daniel Rudd Scholarship Fund.

A raffle to generate scholarship funds was held July 11, the feast day of St. Benedict, patron saint of schoolchildren (and brother of St. Scholastica). Only 200 tickets were sold, for a donation of \$100. Baltimore City Councilman Carl Stokes won the grand prize, \$10,000. The remaining \$10,000 will be used to award scholarships and to set up an endowment. Generous donations added to the success.

Great support flowed throughout the Catholic community, including Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien; Bishop Denis J. Madden; Monsignors Edward Miller, Damien Nalepa and Arthur Valenzano; and many pastors, as well as The Catholic Review.

A sub-committee of the board created the vision and promoted the cause. Janice D. Rattley, David Charon, Rodney Camphor, Albert McGill and Gwendolyn Mullen served as the engines. Great energy and promotion was rendered by all board members, including Deacon Paul Shelton, president; Leon A. Epps Jr., vice president; Michelly B. Merrick, secretary; and John Berkley, Bessie Black, Karen Bowens, Mary G. Clayton, Paula B. Cullings, Doris Foster, Dr. Paula Langford, Janet Pettaway, Oblate Sister of Providence Clarice Proctor and Kevin Simmons. This collaborative became proof positive of the strength of uniting together for good works. It affirmed the African proverb that states, "when birds fly together in coordination, they reach their destination."

The board was inspired to initiate this effort when the Catholic Schools Report gave light to the fact that many of our own African American Catholic youths whose families desire Catholic education for their children could not afford such an education. As a humble response to this challenge, a collective pulling together of

resources for the good of our community (“ujima” and “ujamaa”) and as a remembrance of Rudd, the Scholarship Fund is now proudly established. This is what happens when God’s people pull together to build a solution. This is what happens because God’s grace does keep pace with whatever we face.

The story of Rudd and the actions of those early National Black Catholic Congresses continue to give inspiration. One of 12 children, Rudd was born Aug. 7, 1854, to Robert and Elizabeth Rudd. His father was a slave on the Rudd estate, near Bardstown, Ky. Both parents were Catholic. After the Civil War, Daniel Rudd moved to Springfield, Ohio (where his elder brother, Robert Rudd was living) in order to get a secondary school education. There in 1886 Daniel Rudd began a black newspaper, the Ohio State Tribune. That same year Rudd changed the focus of this weekly newspaper and gave it a new name, The American Catholic Tribune, the only Catholic journal owned and published by colored men. The newsletter is now electronically published, by the National Black Catholic Congress Office here in Baltimore as the African American Catholic Tribune.

In 1889, at the age of 35 and after receiving support from Cardinal James Gibbons, Rudd called together the very first National Black Catholic Congress. The meeting was held at the mother church of black Catholics in Washington, D.C., St. Augustine. Distinguished men of African descent came from all over the United States to participate in this historic event. President Grover Cleveland invited them to the White House for a meeting. Father Augustus Tolton, the first recognized black Priest ordained for the United States (but ordained in Rome) was present and celebrated High Mass.

Rudd orchestrated five Black Catholic Congresses. In 1894, it was in Baltimore, at St. Peter Claver Church Hall, with an opening dinner at Historic St. Francis Xavier Church. Because of Rudd’s influence and initiative, Benedictine Father Cyprian Davis, noted historian, states that Daniel Rudd is one of the most important figures of the 19th and 20th centuries.

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