



ARCHDIOCESE  
of MILWAUKEE

BLACK CATHOLIC *March*  
FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

*Promoting peace, solidarity and equality*

July 11 • 9 a.m.

*St. Francis of Assisi Parish*

## Schedule of March for Racial Justice

- 9:00 am **Gathering St. Francis of Assisi (Due to COVID-19 social distancing safety and security observed)**
- 9:15 am **Event Introduction (Mary Words, Chair of Black Catholic Ministry Commission)**  
**Acknowledgement of participating offices and entities (Fessahaye Mebrahtu, Director of Black Catholic and Ethnic Ministries)**
- 9:30 am **Opening Prayer and History of St. Francis of Assisi and its relation to the African American community (Fr. Mike Bertram , Pastor of St. Francis and St. Benedict)**
- March Starts : Vel Phillips Ave (South) to Walnut St. (West) to 6<sup>th</sup> St (South) and to Galena (West) 7th and Gale-na**
- 9:45 am **Blessed Martin site:**  
**Libation will be offered (Dr. Antoinette Mensah)**  
**Prayer**  
**The history of the closed Black Churches**  
**Poem: Still I Rise (Tai K. Words—performance)**
- March Continues: Galina (East) to 6th St and turn right (South) towards MATC turn (West) on 6th and State to 9th St.**
- 10:15 am **St. Benedict the Moor – Final destination.**  
**History of St. Bendict Parish and St. Benedict School (Fr. Michael Bertran)**  
**History of St. Anthony Hospital (Bruce Words, Sr.)**  
**Poem: If I Say I am a Christian – (Attributed to Maya Angelou)**  
**Final prayer, benediction and dismissal**

## Acknowledgements & Gratitude

**Bishop Haines, Auxiliary Bishop of Milwaukee and the Office of Archbishop Jerome ListECKI; Fr. Michael Bertram OFM Cap (Pastor of St. Francis and St. Benedict); All Members Black Catholic Ministry Commission, especially, the March for Racial Justice—Ad Hoc Committee; Offices of Urban Ministry Initiative, Dignity of the Human Person/Social Justice Ministry, Hispanic Ministry, Communications, Lay Ministry, all parishioners, especially St. Francis and St. Benedict, all volunteers, march-captains, donors, transportation help and all participants, who came out to show support for the fight for racial justice and just society. Photo credits to Milwaukee Public Library.**

***Fessahaye Mebrahtu***

***Director of Black Catholic and Ethnic Ministries***

***Mary Words***

***Chairperson of Black Catholic Ministry Commission***

## St. Benedict the Moor Church

**St. Benedict the Moor Church** was established as the first Catholic Church for black people in the state of Wisconsin. After early, lay evangelization efforts in the African American community, the Capuchin friars accepted responsibility for the parish located at 9<sup>th</sup> and State Streets with Fr. Stephen Eckert as its first resident pastor. The church building was constructed in 1923 with funds provided by Ernest G. Miller of the Miller Brewing Company. Through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, various ministries developed to serve the African American community, most notably St. Benedict School and St. Anthony Hospital. In 1971, a community meal was added to the ministries that continues to serve the poor of central city Milwaukee.

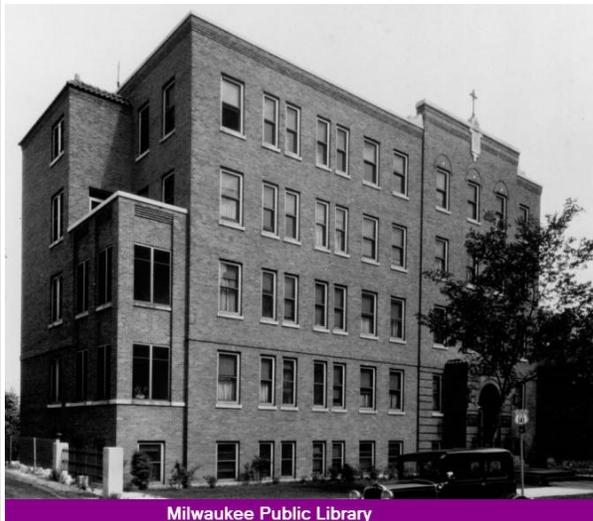


*St. Benedict the Moor school children praying a "Storm Novena"*



## St. Anthony Hospital 1931-1966

St. Anthony Hospital located at 1004 N. 10th St was built as a 42 bed hospital in 1931 by the Capuchin Order. Its mission was to provide healthcare to the underprivileged and also to provide a place for African American doctors to practice medicine. Though originally intended as a health facility for African Americans, St. Anthony Hospital eventually developed into an integrated small hospital in the downtown area. St. Anthony Hospital, was built primarily to service to underprivileged patients. , will close July 1 because of lack of support-both financial and moral from religious and community organizations.



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In the 1940s, the hospital was enlarged and updated, more than doubling its original bed capacity, bringing it up to 120. However, the effort to expand and renovate the hospital was not endorsed. It was announced to on Friday, May 27, 1966 to close the Hospital and it was closed on July 1, 1966. The turn of events was a great disappointment to the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls-Minnesota, who run the Hospital and to the Capuchin Friars who owned the property. Both religious orders had given their best to the Milwaukee community; and, as pointed out by Dr. Frank Ziehl, the Chief of Staff at St. Anthony's the Hospital had maintained its high quality and efficiency of hospital services in spite of its outdated and inadequate facilities. The Sisters and the Friars appreciated the opportunity to listen, learn and interact with people from the African American culture.

## Blessed Martin de Porres Church



**Blessed Martin de Porres Church**, once located at 702 W. Galena, was originally Sacred Heart Church whose parishioners were Croatian. The church building was built in 1918. When the Croatian community moved to 917 N. 49<sup>th</sup> Street in 1940, Blessed Martin de Porres Church was opened in the same building in 1950 for the African American community in the neighborhood.

Fr. Julian Phelan, a Capuchin from New York, most notably served Blessed Martin de Porres Parish from 1950-1954. The parish also consisted of a parish hall which was used, among other purposes, for Boy Scout meetings. In 1954, Fr.

turned to New York where he was raised. Blessed Martin de Porres Church was subsequently demolished in 1962 to make room for the Hillside housing development.



*Palm Sunday Procession at Sacred Heart/Blessed Martin de Porres Church, 1938*

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## St. Rose of Lima and St. Michael

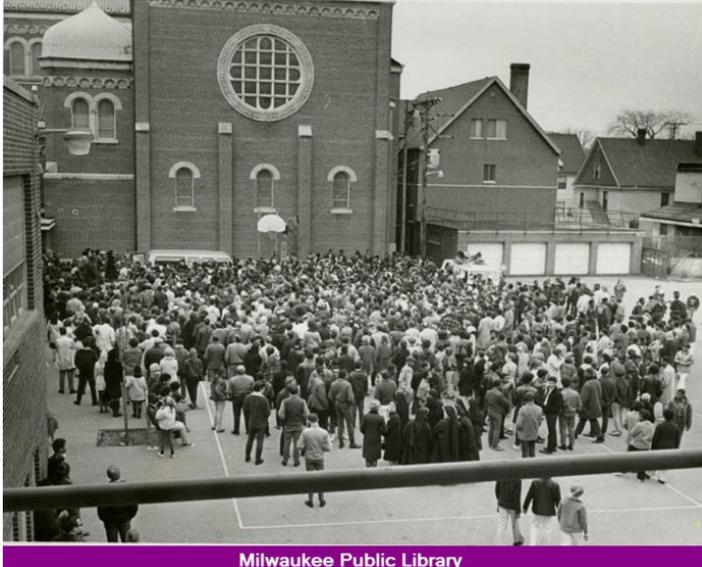
St. Rose of Lima and St. Michael parishes have been serving African Americans for decades. They were among few of the city parishes that did not merge or close. St. Rose currently is one of the sites of Messmer Catholic Schools, serving majority African American Children from urban neighborhoods.

St. Rose and St. Michael are in a demographic shift, increasingly serving new immigrants and refugees, namely Hmong, Burmese ethnicities and Latino population. Fr. Rafael Rodriguez is the pastor of both churches.



## St. Boniface Church

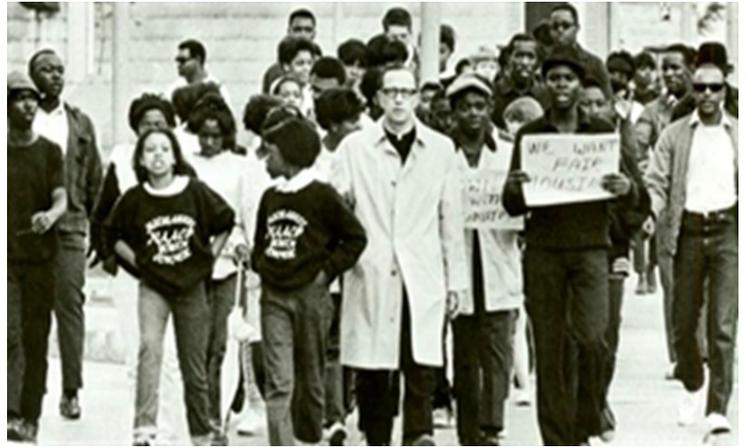
There was no Catholic Church more associated with the Milwaukee civil rights movement of the 1960's than **St. Boniface Church** located on 11<sup>th</sup> Street between Center and Clarke Streets. The parish was founded in 1888 and the building constructed in 1894. After a young priest by the name of Fr. James Groppi was assigned to the parish as associate pastor in 1963, St. Boniface became the center for many demonstrations, meetings and rallies advocating for open housing and school desegregation for African Americans in Milwaukee.



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day to mark the great events that marked the Milwaukee Catholic Church's involvement in the struggle for civil rights for African Americans.

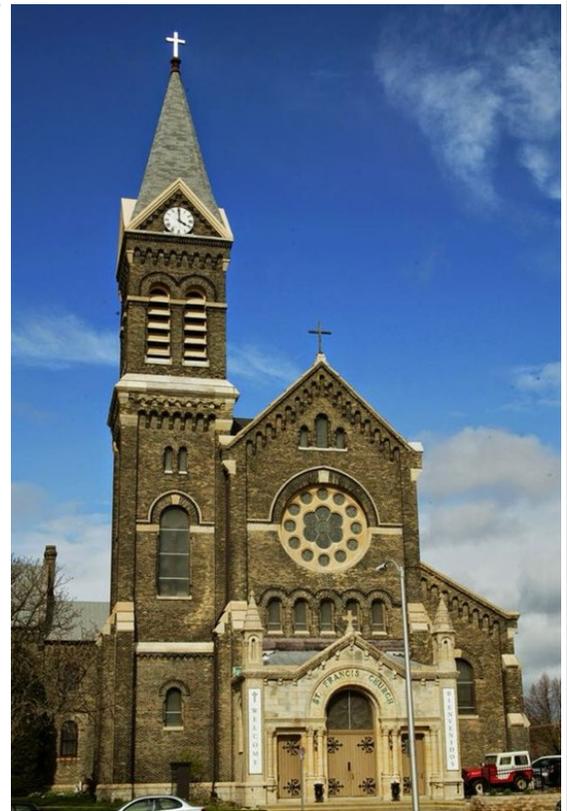
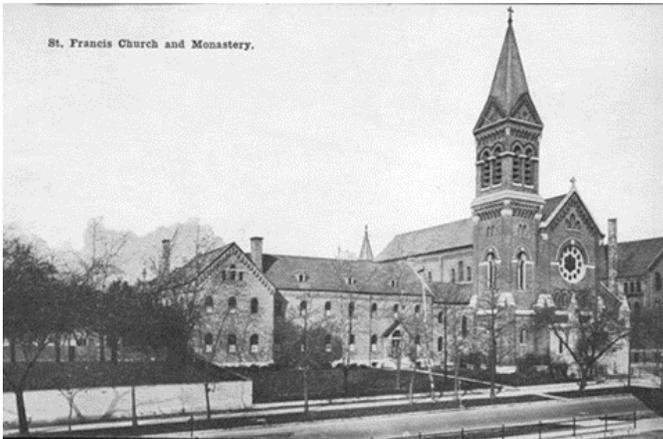
Fr. Groppi was transferred to another parish in 1970, and with the planned construction of the new North Division High School, all of the St. Boniface buildings were demolished. No remnants of St. Boniface Church



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## St. Francis of Assisi Parish

In 1869, the Capuchin friars built the first wing of a monastery that was to grow into a school of theology and comprise a parish church for German Catholics. **St. Francis of Assisi** Parish was founded in 1871 and the church building was completed in 1876. Over the years, the parish served as home for many different peoples and presently is comprised of an African American, white, and Latino population. St. Francis of Assisi was at the center of the Milwaukee's civil rights demonstrations, the first of which took place on the grounds of St. Francis of Assisi on July 29, 1967. Presently, the parish and the Capuchin friars continue in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi in their service to the poor and marginalized.





## All Saints Church

All Saints Church located at 4051 N. 25th St. 53209 established in 1995 as one of the two churches emerging for the closing and merging of nine central city parishes. All Saints is deeply rooted in needs of the most venerable in Milwaukee and has been home to Catholic scholars such as Bishop Joseph N. Perry Auxiliary Bishop, Archdiocese of Chicago Vicar for Vicariate VI, and Dr. James Cameron, author, activist, and founder of America's Black Holocaust Museum.

All Saints' mission is "With the help of God, we, the members of all Saints Catholic Church commit to celebrate the Death and Resurrection of Jesus in Word and Eucharist; bring the Good News of Christ to the people of Milwaukee's central city and beyond; work for justice for the poor and the powerless; build up and foster a multi-racial, multi-cultural community of faith, hope and love." Since its establishment in 1995, Fr. James Arthur is All Saints fifth pastor.

## ST. MARTIN DE PORRES

St. Martin de Porres Catholic Church formerly known as St. Elizabeth Catholic Church is located at 128 West Burleigh. Mass is celebrated on Sundays at **9:00 a.m.** Father James Arthur is the pastor St. Martin de Porres and All Saints Catholic Church. The mission and vision of St. Martin de Porres is to be a community of disciples rooted in Scripture, strengthened in sacrament, committed to justice and steadfast in service. The mission is carried out through the participation of the congregation as members of the Pastoral Council and in the parish committees of Christian Formation, Parish Finance and Administration, Parish Life and Prayer and Worship. The commitment to scripture is highlighted through the participation in the ministries of the Rosary Plus Group, The Men's Group, and Liturgical Dance and the Music Ministry. The mandate and commitment to justice and service is evidenced through the Human Concerns Committee as the congregation feeds the hungry through the Food Pantry.



## Blessed Savior Church

Blessed Savior Catholic Church was created as the result of the combination of four parishes – Corpus Christi Congregation, 8607 W. Villard Ave.; Mary, Queen of Martyrs, 5409 W. Villard Ave.; Our Lady of Sorrows, 4063 N. 64th St.; and St. Philip Neri Parish, 5566 N. 69th St. Blessed Savior has associated schools and has been operating out of Corpus Christi Congregation's location. The schools, however, will continue to operate at their four current locations under one government. The Archdiocese of Milwaukee asked the four parishes to cluster in 2003. Clustered parishes work with others in the surrounding area on programming initiatives, such as sharing staff and planning joint retreats. The parishes presented a merger proposal to then Milwaukee Archbishop Timothy Dolan in June 2006. Dolan accepted the proposal and appointed the first parish's pastor **Rev. Gregory A. Chycinski** in



**BLACK CATHOLIC MINISTRY COMMISSION STATEMENT  
IN RESPONSE TO ACTS OF POLICE VIOLENCE IN AMERICA**

On June 8th members of the Black Catholic Ministry Commission of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee gathered for our monthly meeting and spent part of it discussing troubling events in our country:

In 2014, Eric Garner died from a chokehold by the Police in New York City; Dreasjon “Sean” Reed shot and killed in Indianapolis; Breonna Taylor, an emergency medical technician in Louisville, shot eight times in her bed; Ahmaud Arbery killed while out jogging in a South Georgia neighborhood; and most recently George Floyd in Minneapolis dying from a police officer’s knee on his neck as Mr. Floyd screamed, “I can’t breathe!” The Commission wanted to share with you some of our reflections on these events and on the Black Lives Matter Movement in light of Catholic Social Teachings.

It is no secret that in many places throughout our nation there are tensions between law enforcement and people in the communities that they are sworn “to serve and protect”. These tensions have given rise to further conflicts and the creation of a “Black Lives Matter” versus “Blue Lives Matter” dichotomy. While we cannot ignore or excuse the profound challenges and issues within the Black community, (e.g. Black on Black crime), the focus of this statement is to address the rising tension between many of our brothers and sisters in the Black community and our brothers and sisters in law enforcement.

We condemn all these acts of violence. We recognize that the vast majority of law enforcement officers are not brutal, uncaring and reckless in the exercise of their considerable power and authority; and contrary to stereotypes and media images, the vast majority of Black people are not malevolent, lazy and looking for a handout. However, we are deeply disturbed that so many interactions between people of color and law enforcement have resulted in death and that there often appears to be little legal or professional accountability. We strongly believe that police reform is necessary and critical throughout the country.

Every life in this country should mean something – from conception to natural death. “Black Lives Matter” is not a declaration of self-importance; instead, it is more a declaration of vulnerability. Inherently, all lives cannot matter until Black lives matter. Regrettably, our nation’s history, current events, and a vast array of data on human well-being (income, wealth, health, education, etc.) demonstrate the opposite that Black Lives **Don’t** Matter due to systemic racism.

Our communities need the police. We are grateful for their service and acknowledge their jobs are at times very dangerous. However, when their actions result in numerous senseless deaths of African Americans, we are all affected by this. When this happens, the sense of trust and common purpose that is essential for creating and maintaining healthy communities is undermined. As one body, we as church are called to express social justice principles, and we are called to strongly affirm the Black Lives Matter foundational principles, standing up for those who have been left out and unheard. Addressing systemic racism and the many forms of de jure and de facto discrimination, particularly in our criminal justice system, is the responsibility of all of us and especially our religious leaders and lawmakers.

Acknowledging the great complexity and deep historical and cultural roots of these issues, we would like to focus on one area – law enforcement – and suggest six concrete things that could be done to lessen the risks of fatal encounters between officers and the people in our communities whom they are sworn to serve and protect.

Without justice there can be no peace, and justice demands that:

- ◆ All human life must be respected and protected equally.
- ◆ Law Enforcement officers are held accountable for their willful negligence and compliance in rac-

ist activities and actions; and when justified, as in the death of Mr. George Floyd, they are arrested and prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

- ◆ Chokeholds and other life-threatening forms of physical restraint be banned throughout the country when a suspect is not resisting arrest, and/or is already in custody.
- ◆ Legislation be passed to establish a national database to check personnel records of police officers who apply for law enforcement positions when they relocate.
- ◆ Law Enforcement agencies must improve and expand training in cultural sensitivity and crisis intervention, de-escalation of conflict, and other areas that can help to lessen the risk of violent interactions.
- ◆ More opportunities for officers be created to build healthy and cooperative relationships with communities, especially with our youth.

We further suggest that the following principles of Catholic Social Teachings can assist us in these efforts:

- ◆ Life and Dignity of the Human Person—Black lives matter because all lives matter, and until they do, the value of all human life will be diminished.
- ◆ Solidarity--In a community as segregated by race and class as Metro Milwaukee, we need to develop ways for people to have honest and respectful conversations on racism so that we can build a stronger sense of the common good.

It is our prayer that People of God within our communities might gain a better understanding of what the “Black Lives Matter” movement is all about. With that understanding, we hope that together we will begin honest conversations about confronting injustice and our universal call to be the heart, the hands and the voice of Christ in our world.

*Black Catholic Ministry Commission  
June 25, 2020*

## **PLEDGE & PLAN OF ACTION FOR RACIAL & SOCIAL JUSTICE**

### **My Call to Action**

**I understand racism is a sin; therefore, I stand for racial justice and equality and in my personal attempt to help dismantle unjust systems and structures that oppress people of African descent (Black people), I pledge to...**

- Pray for racial justice, for conversion of hearts and minds to end racial and any forms of hatred;
- Educate myself of systemic racism and its negative effect on peoples life and human dignity;
- To use culturally appropriate language and to challenge others who do not;
- Hold elected officials accountable to implement policies for common good, especially to—

- **Work for Racial Justice and Social Equity;**
- **Make Healthcare Accessible to all, especially the marginalized;**
- **Make Housings Affordable for the poor;**
- **advocated for Living Wages to improve the quality of life of minorities and the poor.**

Self reflect how I contribute to the solutions and when I have not.

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