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Tapping a Treasure: The Impact of the Institute for Black Catholic Studies on Black Catholicism and the American Catholic Church

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La Salle University
School of Arts and Sciences
Graduate Program in Theology and Ministry

Dissertation

Tapping a Treasure: The Impact of the Institute for Black Catholic Studies on Black Catholicism and the American Catholic Church

By

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree

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DEDICATION

To my grandchildren, Kendall and Logan.
It is never too late.
CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ................................................................................................................. ix

ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................................................. x

INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................................................. xii

Chapter

I. A CHURCH IN CHAINS; THE HISTORY OF BLACK CATHOLICISM IN THE UNITED STATES ................................................................................................................................. 1

The Colonial Church
   Florida under Spanish Rule
   Louisiana
   Maryland: A “Catholic” Colony

Catholic Religious Orders
   The Oblate Sisters of Providence
   The Sisters of the Holy Family

The Church and the Peculiar Institution
   Hierarchical Support for Slavery
   The Courageous Few: Nineteenth-Century Catholic Resistance to Slavery
   The Catholic Slave Experience
   Reconstruction and Its Aftermath

Black Catholic Clergy
Black Catholic Laity
Legacy of Katherine Drexel

The Civil Rights Movement and the Catholic Church
   Catholics and the Civil Rights Movement
   The Church’s Response to the Civil Rights Movement

An Institute for Black Catholic Studies


From Pilot Program to an Established Institute
Institutional Structures
The Early Years of Institutional and Programmatic Development, 1985-1993

III RENEWAL AND NEW INITIATIVES ............................................................................................... 100
Challenge: The Xavier-IBCS Relationship
Challenge of Recruitment and Fundraising
Tensions and Development, 1994-1997
Sister Eva Regina Martin, S.S.F., 1997-2003
  Degree Program Developments
  Certificate and Enrichment Development
Sister Jamie T. Phelps, O.P., 2003-2011
  Certificate and Enrichment Development
  Sister Jamie Resigns
Pamela R. Franco, 2011-2014
  Certificate and Enrichment Programs
Maurice J. Nutt, C.Ss.R. D.Min., 2014-Present
  Issues of Race and the IBCS

IV BLACK CATHOLIC SCHOLARS AND THE INSTITUTE FOR BLACK CATHOLIC STUDIES

Cyprian Davis, Black Catholic Historian
  Cyprian Davis and the Gift of Black Catholicism
  Cyprian Davis and Ecclesial Racism
M. Shawn Copeland, Systematic Theologian
  Copeland and the Gift of Black Catholicism
  Copeland and Black Catholic Theology
  Black Catholic Theological Methodology
  A New Locus for Black Catholic Theology
Bryan N. Massingale, Theologian and Social Ethicist
  Massingale and Racial Justice and Reconciliation
  Massingale and Ecclesial Racism
Davis, Copeland, and Massingale: Some Common Themes
In Conclusion: Three “Race Transcending: Prophets

V A VISIT TO THE INSTITUTE FOR BLACK CATHOLIC STUDIES

Methodology
  Data Collection
The IBCS Visit-Preliminaries
Observations
  The Degree Track
  The C & E Track
  Extracurricular Offerings
  Concluding Thoughts
Interviews and Surveys
  Student Interviews
  Student Surveys
Summary of Students Responses
Staff, Faculty, and Alumni Interviews

Interview Question One: What would you consider to be some of the more significant contributions that the IBCS makes in terms of enhancing Black Catholic ecclesial ministry in the United States?
- Leadership
- Cross Cultural Ministry
- Ministry Skills
- Black Catholic Consciousness
- Social Network
- Enculturation of African Priests
- Doctoral Degrees
- The Experience of the IBCS and Why It Is Effective

Faculty
Recommendations for Attending the IBCS
Summary of the Most Significant Contributions the IBCS Makes in Terms of Enhancing Black Catholic Ecclesial Ministry in the United States

Interview Question Two: What are some of the challenges experienced by Black Catholic ecclesial ministers and how can the IBCS assist students who will encounter these challenges?
- The Challenge of Racism
- How the IBCS Can Challenge Racism
- The Challenge of the American Hierarchy
- Working with the Hierarchy
- The Challenge of Ministry to Latin American Catholics

Versus Black Catholics
- Safeguarding the IBCS Experience
- Challenges to Black Ecclesial Ministry
- Forging the IBCS Identity
- The Challenge of Finding and Maintaining Employment
- The IBCS Network
- The Challenge of Being a White Priest in a Black Church
- The Challenge of Attracting Youth

Summary of the Challenges Experienced by Black Catholic Ecclesial Ministers and How the IBCS Can Assist Students Who Will Encounter These Challenges?

Conclusions
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ABSTRACT

The Institute of Black Catholic Studies (IBCS) at Xavier University in New Orleans was created in 1979 in order to provide a holistic education for those who serve the Black Catholic community. Additionally, the Institute pledged to provide students with the opportunity to understand Black cultural values and celebrate Black contributions to Catholicism in America. The emergence of the IBCS is best understood within the context of the history of Black Catholics in the United States. This historical framework is also necessary to understand racism as an inherent, pervasive dimension of Black Catholic life. This study outlines the administrative and academic development of the IBCS and reveals both the challenges and achievements experienced by the Institute over the past 36 years, in order to demonstrate the impact of the IBCS on Black American Catholicism and the larger American Church.

Through interviews with staff, faculty, alumni, and students, supplemented by archival research, this inquiry demonstrates how the Institute has advanced its mission to the benefit of the Black Catholic community. Black Catholic scholars have distinguished themselves as administrators, professors, or guest lecturers at the IBCS. This study specifically investigates contributions to the IBCS by the scholars, M. Shawn Copeland, Rev. Bryan N. Massingale, and the late Rev. Cyprian Davis. This paper explores how these academics have shaped the IBCS curriculum and argues that they have challenged racism and white privilege within and outside of the
American Church. Their work, along with that of other influential scholars, provides the impetus for gaining effective social justice ministry skills.

This dissertation predicts that the recent relationship formed between the IBCS and the Black Lives Matter movement has brought activism into the academy and poises the Institute for a significant role in accomplishing racial reconciliation within the American Catholic Church. With episcopal support, the IBCS could figure highly in promoting Black Catholic awareness, ministry skills, and, perhaps, eventual racial solidarity.
INTRODUCTION

The Impact of the Institute for Black Catholic Studies on Black Catholicism and the
American Catholic Church (IBCS)

Black Catholics have been part of the texture of religious life in the Americas, including the United States, for over 500 years. Another constant, however, is as unjust as it is unfortunate. White supremacist practices, epitomized in the practice of Black chattel slavery, continue to diminish the status of Black Catholics within the American Catholic Church. Although the slaves were emancipated at the end of the Civil War, the vestiges of slavery remain present today within and outside of the Church. During the antebellum period, Black Catholic slaves were deprived of consistent spiritual care and were subjected to inferior faith formation experiences. At the conclusion of the Civil War, the American Catholic Church failed to prioritize the evangelization of the newly-freed slaves; local dioceses provided for the care of Black Catholics at will, which most often amounted to substandard treatment and segregated services. When Black Catholics worshipped with their white co-religionists, they attended liturgies in the Western European tradition, rather than their own.¹

Although some nineteenth-century white religious orders dedicated themselves to the ministry of Black Catholics, it was rare that a Black man could

attain ordination.\textsuperscript{2} “Jim Crow came to church”\textsuperscript{3} and remained there through the modern Civil Right era. As a result, Black Catholics continued to experience a diminished status within the American Catholic Church. Along with the lack of ministerial roles for Blacks in the hierarchical Church, Black Catholics were not taught the value of their native African religious and spiritual traditions. The notions of community as the center of life, life as an integrated, organized whole, and time as the eternal present in the face of an omnipresent God, were innately Black Catholic. The liberating spirit of Black preaching and song were also distinctively Black Catholic. The American Catholic Church, however, deprived Black Catholics of the opportunity to develop and celebrate these gifts and, concomitantly, denied the Black Catholic contribution to the national Church.\textsuperscript{4}

The Institute for Black Catholic Studies, at Xavier University in New Orleans, emerged at an epiphanic moment during the American Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. The political climate was ripe for the creation of several Black Catholic groups, including the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus (NBCCC) and the Black Catholic Theology Symposium (BCTS). During the second meeting of the BCTS, a proposal for the establishment of an educational institution with a curriculum organized around the pastoral and intellectual needs of Black Catholics was created and presented to the NBCCC. The proposal expressed the belief that Xavier

\textsuperscript{2} Davis, \textit{The History of Black Catholics}, 125-126, 131-133, 146.

\textsuperscript{3} Dolores Egger Labbé, \textit{Jim Crow Comes to Church; The Establishment of Segregated Catholic Parishes in South Louisiana} (Lafayette, Louisiana: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1971).

University would permit the optimal development of the Institute’s objectives, as Xavier was the only Black Catholic university in the nation. Once the NBCCC and Xavier accepted the plan, they pledged that the Institute would provide all Catholics with the chance to understand Black cultural values and celebrate Black contributions to Catholicism in America. At the same time, Black Catholic identity and self-esteem were to be reinforced and enhanced in a supportive environment. Here was an opportunity to rectify some of the consequences of persistent racism throughout the history of the American Catholic Church.

The first intention of this dissertation is to argue that the Institute for Black Catholic Studies (IBCS) in New Orleans, Louisiana, stands as an effective source of ministry development for those who serve Black Catholics in the U.S. An attendant goal is to demonstrate that an awareness of the cultural and religious traditions inherent within Black Catholicism, as taught at the IBCS, benefit not only Black Catholics but the entire Church. As a final objective, this paper posits that the Institute for Black Catholic Studies has the potential to be a center for racial justice and, indeed, racial reconciliation within the Church, through its prevailing ideology and its current association with the Black Lives Matters movement. Although this paper focuses on the effects of racism within the Church, the IBCS’s academic appropriation of Black Lives Matter, in conjunction with its present curriculum and

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the potential for a more developed racial justice program of study, could serve as a resource for national racial reconciliation.

Thirty-six years since its inception, the IBCS continues to serve the Black Catholic community and those who minister to it. The Institute is housed at Xavier University in New Orleans, Louisiana, the only national Black Catholic University in the hemisphere. The IBCS operates a three-week summer session, which includes both a degree and an enrichment program. Students of all races and ethnicities come from around the world in order to earn an advanced degree or hone their ministry skills. The degree program operates for the entire three weeks and extends over a five-year period, while certificate and enrichment programs are taken in one-week intervals. The program is holistic in that it consists of academic, liturgical, and social components within the framework of a supportive, community atmosphere.6

The IBCS grew and developed amid a multitude of challenges and triumphs. It is formed by and, concomitantly, introduces its students to some of the most brilliant Black Catholic minds in the country. The Institute has been a summer home to the late historian Cyprian Davis, and theologians such as the late Sister Thea Bowman, as well as Sister Jamie Phelps, Bryan Massingale, and M. Shawn Copeland. Because of the Institute’s commitment to a communal environment, students not only study with great thinkers, they worship, pray, and share meals; and, together, they celebrate evocative rituals. The IBCS students and professors form life-long

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friendships as well as professional relationships, thereby creating a network of support and affirmation, which enhances the significant academic knowledge and ministerial skills obtained at the Institute.  

The IBCS faces the difficulty of maintaining a positive relationship with Xavier University as well as internal administrative and organizational dilemmas, funding, and publicity. The most critical question that continues to confront the Institute, however, is how to survive and thrive within the context of a fundamentally racist Catholic Church. The episcopacy consistently upholds the status quo of white supremacy, particularly through its dispassionate implementation of pastoral letters condemning racism. This mentality does not serve the IBCS well. Without the support of the hierarchy, there is no urgency for seminarians, foreign priests, or other ministers to attend the Institute, which, ironically, remains the primary place in America to learn Black Catholic culture and acquire the skills necessary to serve Black and multiracial communities.

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7 Interviews with IBCS faculty and staff with author, July 13-July 17, 2015; Most Rev. Brendan J. Cahill, interview with author, August 27, 2015; Toinette M. Eugene, interview, Fall, 2016.


The American Catholic Church has historically dedicated itself to serving white Catholics, although presently there is an acute interest in ministering to Hispanic/Latino Catholics due to both their traditional Catholic faith and their large numbers in the U.S.\(^\text{11}\) Hispanic/Latino Catholics certainly deserve the attention of the American Catholic Church. Black Catholics, however, have been a part of the American tapestry for 500 years and should not be ignored due to their low or diminishing numbers or because of financial priorities. Black Catholicism is a gift to the American Catholic Church in a multitude of ways, which includes a deep sense of God's omnipresence, an appreciation of the sacredness in all creation, and an awareness of both the inclusive nature and value of the community.\(^\text{12}\)

At a time when individualism, consumerism, and materialism hold such prominence in our society, Black Catholic values as taught and cherished at the IBCS would be beneficial for the entire American Church. American culture erodes the value system of all Americans, which can lead to the disintegration of families, and Black families are particularly prone to fragmentation due to the multiple effects of

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\(^\text{11}\) There are approximately 30.4 million people in the United States who self-identify their religion as Catholic and their ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino/a. Fifty-seven percent of adult Hispanics self-identify as Catholics. Forty percent of all growth in registered parishioners in Catholic parishes between 2005 and 2010 was from Hispanic or Latino/a Catholics. Although the retention rate of Hispanic Catholics has fallen since 2006, it is still greater than that of non-Hispanics. “Hispanics in the United States and the Catholic Church,” \url{http://www.usccb.org/about/leadership/holy-see/benedict-xvi/upload/Papal-Transition-2013-Hispanics.pdf} (accessed March 13, 2017); “Fact Sheet: Hispanic Catholics in the U.S.” \url{http://cara.georgetown.edu/staff/webpages/Hispanic%20Catholic%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf}

perennial racism. Appreciation of Black Catholicism offers a powerful alternative for what is afflicting both our country and our Church.¹³

At the time of this writing, the IBCS has hosted two Black Lives Matter Symposia and plans to continue to do so on an annual basis. The Institute is credited with bringing the movement to the academy, which provides a new and more sustainable model for Black Lives Matter.¹⁴ These well-attended conferences are a major achievement for the IBCS and have, hopefully, cast a spotlight on the Institute and its attributes. The Institute’s association with the Black Lives Matter movement creates the potential for the IBCS to become a national center for racial justice by interfacing the symposium model with the Institute curriculum. Whether through the national attention given to the Institute by hosting Black Lives Matter symposia or through permanent incorporation of Black Lives Matters programs within the curriculum of the IBCS, there remains a possibility that the episcopacy will come to understand the value of the Institute as it views these contributions through the lens of current racial tensions.

The recent election of Donald Trump as President of the United States demonstrates an extensive identification with both racist and isolationist principles throughout America.¹⁵ Will the American Catholic hierarchy appreciate the


¹⁵ Trump supporters are 89.7% white and he appeals most strongly to those whites who hold negative views of African Americans. According to a June 2016 Reuters/Ipsos survey, the percentage of Trump voters who agree with such statements as “Blacks are less intelligent than whites” and “Blacks are more lazy than whites,” far outstrip supporters of any other candidate, Republican or
importance of supporting an Institute dedicated not only to Black Catholic ministry but also to racial justice at such a critical time in our nation’s history? Or, once again, will an opportunity be lost as it was at the end of the Civil War and the beginning of the Civil Rights movement? The Institute of Black Catholic Studies stands ready as an agency of hope, equipped to work toward racial justice and genuine solidarity if afforded the opportunity.

Outline of Chapters

The content of Chapter One, which is an outline of the history of Black Catholicism in the United States, was chosen to provide the context for the emergence of the IBCS. After the historical setting is understood, Chapters Two and Three present the development of the IBCS from the time of its inception through the present day, in order to trace the impact of the Institute as it educated ministers for the Black Catholic community. Chapter Four describes my visit to the IBCS, which included classroom observations as well as faculty and student interviews, in order to establish the Institute’s present effect on Black Catholicism. This account is followed by Chapter 5, which examines the contributions of three influential scholars associated with the IBCS, Father Cyprian Davis, M. Shawn Copeland, and Father Bryan Massingale, in order to determine their influence on the Institute as well as Black Catholicism in general.

Finally, Chapter 6 considers the potential role of the IBCS as an agency of racial reconciliation and solidarity. A more detailed description of the six chapters follows.

Chapter One describes Black Catholicism in America from the time of the earliest explorers through the Catholic Theological Society of America’s (CTSA) preliminary studies that led to the emergence of the Black Catholic Theological Symposium and the IBCS. The purpose of this section is to provide the context from which the Institute emerged through an appreciation of Black Catholic history in America. The IBCS was established at a peculiar moment in history when conditions were amenable to the creation of such an Institute. These circumstances were the result of centuries of struggle from the time the first Catholic slaves arrived in this country in 1536, until the modern Civil Rights era.

In addition, this chapter surveys the experiences of Black Catholic slaves as their numbers grew steadily in Florida, Louisiana, and Maryland. The foundation of Black Catholic religious orders for women, such as the Sisters of the Holy Family and the Oblate Sisters of Providence, are examined. The religious lives of slaves as well as the various ecclesial responses to “the peculiar institution”\(^\text{16}\) are explored. The period of Reconstruction, which precipitated the first phase of Jim Crow within American society and the Church, the difficult path toward priestly ordination, and the significance of Black Catholic lay movements, are surveyed. Katharine Drexel’s mission to Black Catholics is described as it led to the establishment of Xavier University, the eventual home of the IBCS. The Catholic response to the Civil Rights

movement in the 1960’s and, most significantly, the Black Catholic response to the movement resulted in an energized community, ready to inaugurate change for their benefit and the wellbeing of the Church.

Chapter 2 describes the inception of the Institute of Black Catholic Studies in 1979 and reviews its development through the Directorship of Father Joseph A. Brown, which ended in 1994. Both original Institute policy and its relationship with Xavier University are defined, including the emergence and development of both a Policy Committee and Advisory Committee for the IBCS. This era was a period of institutional stabilization, and programs were initiated and developed. Extension courses were created, and the Proseminar was instituted to assist students in overcoming obstacles to graduation. Prominent Black Catholic faculty became part of the new endeavor, including Rev. Cyprian Davis, Sister Thea Bowman, and Sister Jamie Phelps; and four men who will eventually minister as Bishops served as faculty: Rev. Terry Steib, Rev. Moses Anderson, Rev. Wilton Gregory, and Rev. Edward Braxton.

Chapter Three explores the development of the IBCS from 1994 until the present. With the termination of Father Brown, the IBCS operated without a director from 1993-1997; this section outlines the alignment of the Xavier/IBCS relationship during a contentious time. Explored here are the directorships of Sister Eva Marie Martin (1997-2003), Sister Jamie Phelps (2003-2011), the interim directorship of Dr. Pamela Franco (2011-2014), and Father Maurice Nutt (2014-present). The finalization of both Certification and Enrichment (C & E) programs and Spirituality
programs are described, as well as the Institute’s academic progression into the twenty-first century.

**Chapter Four** recounts my visit to the IBCS program during the summer of 2015. Classroom visits, liturgical experiences, and social events are described, which serve to illustrate the vibrant, holistic curriculum of the Institute. Student survey results are examined, which include questions about their overall experience at the Institute, and their encounters with ecclesial racism. The contents of on-site interviews with staff, faculty, and students are related, as well as telephone and written interviews with alumni, staff, and faculty.

**Chapter Five** highlights the theological contributions of three Black Catholic scholars who have been closely associated with the Institute. The chapter begins with a glimpse into the life of late Church historian, Cyprian Davis, who served as an unofficial academic dean at the IBCS from the time of its inception until his death in 2015. Davis’ achievements have been celebrated by other theologians, which are described in this section. The theological work of Father Bryan Massingale and Dr. M. Shawn Copeland are explored due to their recent publications on racial justice and the manner in which they illustrate the liberative impact of Black Catholic theology on the IBCS curriculum. Massingale was a former faculty member at the IBCS and he remains associated with the Institute; most recently, he was the keynote speaker at the November 2015 Black Lives Matter symposium held at the IBCS. Copeland was associated with the Institute from 1994-2005 as both a faculty member and as the Assistant Director of the Degree Program.
Chapter Six outlines the current tense racial environment in the U.S. triggered by police involved shootings. The ecclesial response is evaluated, including that of the episcopacy. The significance of the Institute’s recent relationship with the Black Lives Matters movement is discussed. The potential of a new segment within Black Catholic theology is considered along with the possibility of the IBCS evolving into a national center for Catholic racial justice and, ultimately, Christian solidarity. A summary of the present and future impact of the IBCS on Black Catholicism and the American Catholic Church are offered in conclusion.

The Institute of Black Catholic Studies was not created for the purpose of mitigating or confronting racism; the IBCS was created to form effective ministers who were mindful of the heritage and contributions of Black Catholics in the U.S. Racism is, however, an inseparable subplot in every course throughout the IBCS program. Because racism and white privilege have deformed the course of Black Catholicism from its inception, these evils remain an unfortunate, yet significant part of its story. The history of Black Catholicism, the development of the IBCS through the present day, and the contributions of those scholars associated with the Institute, confirm the need for a vigilant pursuit of racial justice and reconciliation within the U.S. Catholic Church. The IBCS has contributed significantly to this effort and will continue to do so. The scale of IBCS participation in the struggle for racial reconciliation within the Church depends, paradoxically, on the hierarchy, an association that has traditionally marginalized attempts to cleanse this evil from within its own body.
Chapter 1

A Church in Chains: The History of Black Catholicism in the United States

The story of African American Catholicism is the story of a people who obstinately clung to a faith that gave them sustenance, even when it did not make them welcome...Blacks had to fight for their faith; but their fight was often with members of their own (church) household.¹ - Cyprian Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States*

The history of Black Catholicism is the account of a people whose faith journey has been perenni ally challenged by the evil of racism. The metal manacles, which shackled the first Black Catholic slaves who arrived in the Americas, were the first of a series of “chains” that Black Catholics have endured as they sought to live their lives and practice their faith. This chapter conveys how Black Catholics courageously encountered the challenges confronting the practice of their religion from the time they endured the horrors of chattel slavery through the time of their response to the manifestations of racism and white privilege in the Church during the modern civil rights era. It describes the actions of co-religionists who insisted on white supremacy and whose inhumane actions or errant indifference consistently obstructed the spiritual welfare and equality of Black Catholics. This section also explores the actions of heroic Catholics, black and white, lay and religious, who dauntlessly defied the system and demanded the Gospel imperative. The purpose

¹ Cyprian Davis, *The History of Black Catholicism*, 259.
of surveying the entirety of the Black Catholic experience in the U.S. is to provide the context for the emergence of the Institute of Black Catholic Studies (IBCS), as well as an introduction to the Institute’s significance within the Church.

The genuine and enduring wave of activism, which led to any authentic change in the faith lives of Black Catholics, had been historically attributed to the grassroots engagement of the Black Catholic laity. The civil rights movement of the 1960s, however, ignited the passion of Catholic clergy and religious, both Black and white. The subsequent organization of Black Catholic clergy, religious sisters, and lay leaders exposed the urgent need for the spiritual and intellectual development of Black Catholics. At this critical juncture in history, the concept of a Black Catholic institute was born.

The Institute for Black Catholic Studies was, therefore, conceived within the historical context of the Black Catholic experience, which serves as the essential backdrop for any appreciation of the development, function, and value of the Institute for Black Catholics and the American Catholic Church. The dedication of this chapter to the history of Black Catholicism serves to explicate the circumstances from which the IBCS emerged in order to understand its essence and predict how the Institute will continue to serve in the future.

**The Colonial Church**

In 1525, Spanish settlers in Santo Domingo were the first to bring Black slaves to the New World. From the mid-1540s to 1580, approximately 1,200 African captives were imported to the Americas. By 1625, it is estimated that approximately
475,000 enslaved Africans had been involuntarily transported to the Spanish Americas and Brazil.\textsuperscript{2} The origins of the slave trade were stimulated by the sanctioning of slavery by Pope Nicholas V in 1450 when he enjoined the Portuguese to “attack, subject, and reduce to perpetual slavery the Saracens, pagans and other enemies of Christ”\textsuperscript{3} southward from Cape Bojador on the northwest African coast.\textsuperscript{4}

At first, the local people or Indians were used as free labor; however, the native population decreased dramatically after the Europeans arrived in the Americas. Warfare, disease, and forced labor decreased the estimated number of indigenous peoples from 50 million in 1500 to 8 million by 1600. Local Indian labor had to be replaced and, therefore, a thriving African slave trade was inaugurated.\textsuperscript{5}

Racism was not yet defined as a fact much less a sin, but the slave trade began to exert its evil consequences immediately in the Americas. Even St. Peter Claver, who begged for permission to work with the slaves in the New World in order to Christianize them, did not demonstrate any speculative or practical evidence of denouncing the institution or practice of slavery in his communication with his Jesuit superiors.\textsuperscript{6} In fact, Claver selected his interpreters from a slave pool


\textsuperscript{4}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{5}“Spain’s Slavery Contract,” Portcities: Bristol, discoveringbristol.org.uk/slavery/route/places…/Spain-slavery-contract (accessed April 26, 2016).

purchased by the Jesuits at his command, and he disciplined his slaves as he saw fit. Instead of the “slave of the slaves,” Claver was a slave master and his sainthood signifies not the Catholic Church’s corporate opposition to the transatlantic slave trade, but rather its terrible collusion with it.\textsuperscript{7}

The first account of a Catholic slave in the New World appeared in 1536 when a Catholic Spanish-speaking slave named Estaban accompanied three other Spaniards on a harrowing trip through the lands that are now Florida, Texas, and Arkansas. Estaban forged ahead as a guide and died at the hands of the Zuni Indians because they failed to believe that he could be the messenger of the white man.\textsuperscript{8} Spanish-speaking Blacks were also present in the expedition of Coronado in 1540 and the fact that they are rarely noted is an omission in the saga of Catholicism in the United States.\textsuperscript{9}

\textit{Florida under Spanish Rule} Through the efforts of Pedro Menendez de Aviles, St. Augustine, Florida, was established in 1565, and became the primordial home for African Americans in the United States as slaves and free persons. African slaves were brought here for the first time in 1581.\textsuperscript{10} In 1687, ten fugitives from the


\textsuperscript{9} Davis, \textit{The History of Black Catholics}, 29-30.

Protestant English colony of Carolina reached St. Augustine and, in need of a sanctuary, asked for Catholic baptism. Faced with the dilemma of losing his mortal soul, Governor Diego de Quiroga allowed the baptisms and later refused to extradite the refugees. From that point, an effective “grapevine” encouraged other Black slaves to journey to Florida. In 1693 King Charles II of Spain proclaimed the liberty of all runaways with the caveat that those given their freedom convert to Roman Catholicism.\footnote{Frank Marotti, \textit{The Cana Sanctuary: History, Diplomacy, and Black Catholic Marriage in Antebellum St. Augustine, Florida} (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2012), 2.} By 1738, the free Black settlement or Palenque, Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose or Ft. Mose, was established about two miles north of St. Augustine. From 1738 until 1763, when the Spanish signed the Treaty of Paris ceding Florida to the British, escaped slaves found a home in that territory.\footnote{Davis, \textit{The History of Black Catholics}, 29-31.}

Spain reacquired the colony in 1784 and the historical traditions associated with Ft. Mose were reinvigorated during this second Spanish period, which lasted until Florida was absorbed by the United States in 1821.\footnote{Marotti, 2.} During this period, baptismal records indicate that there were a substantial number of Black Catholics in Florida who were both slave and free.\footnote{Pope, “St. Augustine once a Hub for Slave Trade.”} A large number of baptisms were attributed to the efforts of Bishop Cyril de Barcelona, the auxiliary bishop of Havana, who insisted that Floridian slaveholders baptize their slaves. Although baptism afforded a religious status and a name, it did not protect a slave from the horrors
associated with their station. Florida was the first of many American locations where slave owners lived the hypocrisy of worshipping God while concomitantly subjecting other human beings to the misery of slavery.

In 1821, as Protestant evangelizers poured into Eastern Florida, Catholicism waned. Paradoxically, between 1821 and 1862 many of the region’s African American couples asked Catholic priests to bless their marriages. Although these marriages were rarely recognized legally, they were accepted by canon law and, therefore, they sometimes exercised moral suasion over their masters. This “Christian paternalism,” as racist as it was, often protected families from separation; in other rare cases, it forced masters to genuinely confront the “inherent conflict between Divine Law and Southern Law” and manumit their slaves.  

**Louisiana** Black Catholicism experienced a distinctive development in Louisiana due to French, Spanish, and later Acadian influences, especially in the area of the cosmopolitan port city of New Orleans. Black slaves were imported to Louisiana through New Orleans even prior to the city’s official founding date of 1718. In 1685, Louis XIV of France promulgated a series of ordinances concerning the life and conduct of African slaves in French colonies and, in 1724, Jean Baptiste le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville, published the first of these codes for the Louisiana Colony. This *Code Noir*, based on Roman law, was founded on the premise that even

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16 Marotti, 2-3.

slaves had certain rights; regardless, these ordinances were consistently harsh and demeaning. For example, the first time a slave was caught in an attempt to escape, his or her ears were cropped and the Fleur de Lys was branded on one shoulder. In terms of their religious application, the codes demanded that all slaves in French colonies be baptized and instructed in the Catholic religion. No other religions were permitted, and if an owner was not Catholic, the slaves could be confiscated. In reality, most slave owners did not feel compelled to offer religious instruction to their slaves, and they were wary of religious assemblies of any sort lest they would serve as a place for slaves to conspire and plan an uprising.

There were some efforts to educate Blacks in the Catholic faith. As mentioned earlier, the Ursulines, who in 1727 were the first religious community to arrive in what is now the United States, established the first school for Negroes and Indians. In 1829, the Chapel of St. Augustine on Isle Brevelle, Louisiana, was dedicated, which was the first Catholic edifice designed and built under the direction of non-whites in America. By 1845 the Society of the Sacred Heart established a school for Negro and Indian children, and in 1867, St. Mary’s School was opened by the Sisters of the Holy Family as the first school organized for Negro girls.

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19 Davis, The History of Black Catholics, 77.


21 Sharps, 122-124.
One distinctive and paradoxical element of the New Orleans lifestyle was the *placage* (French, “to place with”) system. Because of the small number of French women present during the development of the colony, concubinage between French men and the native population, including slaves, became acceptable. These arrangements were bound by the rules of racial segregation; that is, white males and Black women, whether the female be Black, mulatto, or a woman of color (woman of mixed racial heritage, that is ¼ or 1/8 Black), could not legitimately marry. These extralegal understandings were not casual affairs and these unions often culminated in the freedom of the concubines and their descendants along with inheritances leading to prosperity and social recognition. To gain the rewards of the *placage* system, however, with the most coveted return being that of having one’s progeny “pass” as white, was a risky venture. More critically, *placage* could accurately be described as a disturbing, hyper-sensual, and morally ambiguous context where women waged their bodies to attain possible advantages for their loved ones.\(^{22}\)

Strangely enough, the system was given a moral exception within Catholic culture, and while the Church officially forbade it, the tepid and ambiguous moral climate present in New Orleans at that time deemed the situation acceptable. In fact, this “genteel immorality,” a study in lived hypocrisy, produced some of the most devout Catholics in Louisiana, including Henriette Delille.\(^{23}\)


\(^{23}\) Davis, *The History of Black Catholics*, 73.
George Calvert, the First Lord Baltimore, was a Catholic who established the colony of Maryland through a charter from King Charles I of England in 1632. African slaves were one of the main components of this nascent colony as 20 out of every 100 Catholics in Maryland was Black. Lord Baltimore issued edicts requiring Catholic planters in Maryland to allow Negroes and other slaves to receive Catholic sacraments, but an ancillary edict was immediately posted assuring slaveholders that baptism would only free the slaves from their sins, not from their bondage. By the first quarter of the eighteenth century, slaves were being imported into the colony at an extremely rapid pace; by mid-century Maryland was an agricultural center based on a slave economy.

In 1785, John Carroll, the new Prefect Apostolic, reported to Rome that the Catholic population in Maryland was about 15,800. Of this number, 9,000 were adult freemen, that is, persons above 12 years of age; 3,000 were children; and about 3,000 were slaves of all ages. In discussing the moral tone of the Catholic population, Carroll added that there was a lack of care concerning the religious education of African slaves. The Carroll family supported the Jesuits, which as a religious corporation had owned slaves to work their estates as early as 1717. It is not clear why the Jesuits began to own slaves other than the need to maintain their properties; but by the late eighteenth century, the order had conducted a long and

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24 Sharps, 120.


26 Davis, The History of Black Catholics, 41; Thomas Murphy, S.J., Jesuit Slaveholding in Maryland, 1717-1838 (New York: Routledge, 2001), xv.
painful debate over whether and how to end their personal participation in
slaveholding.\textsuperscript{27} Prior to this time, Jesuit slaveholding had been fortified by a belief in
the Protestant origin of abolitionism. The most prolific Jesuit author on slavery
issues, Brother Joseph Mobberly, wrote that abolitionism was a private
interpretation of scripture not initiated by the Church and was, therefore,
heretical.\textsuperscript{28} Jesuit slaveholders, however, were preparing to manumit their slaves
for a variety of religious, economic, and political reasons.

In the meantime, Maryland Black Catholics, both slave and free,
demonstrated a level of piety and spirituality commensurate to white Catholics.
Black Catholic laity formed and sustained the Church through their participation in
lay confraternities, which were established despite legal obstacles. Those enrolled in
the confraternities agreed to perform certain acts of piety, which included the
wearing of a medal or cloth scapular. One such confraternity was Our Lady of
Mount Carmel in Baltimore, which boasted over 1,000 members over a 60-year
period.\textsuperscript{29} Beginning in 1780, Black Catholics formed mutual benefit societies, such as
the Society of the Holy Family in Baltimore, in order to aid and support each other in
times of sickness or the death of a loved one.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{27} Murphy, xv.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., xxi-xxii.

\textsuperscript{29} “The Pre-Civil War Period,” in “Stamped with the Image of God,” 16-17.

\textsuperscript{30} “A Catholic Mutual Benefit Society,” in Ibid., 22.
Catholic Religious Orders

In 1819, after a period of suppression by the Church (1773-1814), Maryland Jesuits were in serious financial trouble, and in 1838 they decided to sell their slaves. Two hundred seventy-two slaves were sold that year and much of the revenue obtained, which was worth about $3.3 million dollars in today’s dollars, was used to save Georgetown University. Jesuit superiors approved sales only if the new owners assured them that slave families would remain intact and continue to practice Catholicism. It was rare, however, that these conditions were met. Roughly two-thirds of the slaves were shipped to two sugar cane plantations so distant from churches that “they would never see a Catholic priest,” according to Rev. Van de Velde, S.J., who visited Louisiana in 1848. Masters were not necessarily Catholic or interested in the salvation of their bondsmen. Sugar cane planters were far more affluent than their cotton and tobacco associates, and therefore generally ignored the welfare of their chattel due to the seemingly endless supply of slave labor.

31 Murphy, xiii.

32 Rachel L. Swarns, “272 Slaves Were Sold to Save Georgetown. What Does It Owe Their Descendants?” The New York Times (April 16, 2016), http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/17/us/georgetown-university-search-for-slave-descendants.html (accessed April 25, 2016). A debate is occurring currently as to how the families of these individuals, whose names have been recently located, should be compensated.

33 Ibid.

34 Davis, The History of Black Catholics, 36-38.

Maryland Jesuits were not the only religious association to hold slaves. The Vincentians, Sulpicians, and Capuchins were among the religious orders of men who possessed slaves.\textsuperscript{36} Similarly, the Ursuline sisters, who came to New Orleans in 1727 from France, owned slaves from the beginning although there was no history of slavery in their homeland. Many young girls upon entering the American community brought slaves with them as a portion of their dowry, which was a practice carried out elsewhere as well.\textsuperscript{37} Unlike other slaveholders in the American South, the Ursulines required that all slaves remained within their nuclear families. Although this practice may have been viewed as more humane, the sisters owned as many slaves as they needed and never characterized slavery as evil.\textsuperscript{38} Paradoxically, the Ursulines’ ministry did include the educational needs of Blacks and Native Americans in and around New Orleans. To this day, they operate the Ursuline Academy in that city for the education of girls from preschool through high school.

The Carmelite nuns at Port Tobacco in Maryland formed the first contemplative community in the United States in 1791, and they too owned slaves, most of whom were part of incoming novices’ dowries. Other female religious groups who held slaves were The Daughters of the Cross in Louisiana, the Society of the Sacred Heart in both Louisiana and Missouri, the Visitation nuns in Washington, and the Dominican Sisters in Kentucky. The Catholic Church prior to the Civil War

\textsuperscript{36} Davis, \textit{The History of Black Catholics}, 37-39.


was truly a church in chains operating within a complex, incongruous matrix of both slavery and service.\(^{39}\)

*The Oblate Sisters of Providence*  In 1827, a novel type of religious order was born. Beginning in 1793, Black as well as white natives fled the slave revolution in the French Caribbean colony of St. Dominique, now known as Haiti. A significant number landed in Baltimore where their shared French culture and Catholic religion bound these exiles with the Society of Saint Sulpice or the Sulpician order of priests. In 1794, Sulpician priest Louis William DuBourg, initiated a catechism class for free Black children.\(^{40}\) In 1827, Sulpician priest, James Hector Joubert requested that two educated Black emigrants, Elizabeth Clarisse Lange and Marie Magdalene Balas, begin to provide religious instruction to young Black girls, as they were already conducting a school in their home.\(^ {41}\) The tenacity of these two women was demonstrated by their capacity to educate without white, male, or institutional approval during a time when slavery was widespread.\(^ {42}\)

Lange and Balas simultaneously informed Joubert of their desire to become sisters, which was a request that engendered much opposition in an environment that distrusted the virtue of Black women. In 1829, Joubert convinced Archbishop

\(^{39}\) Davis, *The History of Black Catholics*, 37; Sharps, 121.


\(^{42}\) Morrow, *Persons of Color and Religious at the Same Time,* 14.
James Whitman of the women’s piety and was able to receive the professions of the four charter members of the Oblate Sisters of Providence: Lange, Balas, Rosine Bogue and Therese Duchemin. Through his actions, Joubert validated the first community of African American Catholic sisters in the eyes of the institutional Church, a Church whose U.S. foundation was formed in the mentality of the South. Even considering the waves of European Catholic immigrants, which shifted the Catholic population to cities in the Northeast, the Catholic Church maintained the imprint of its Southern origins well into the nineteenth century.

In 1828, the Oblate Sisters of Providence founded St. Frances Academy, a school that continues until this day to educate Black Catholic children and is the oldest continually operating school established for that purpose. The sisters’ chapel, built in 1836, was the first chapel in the United States dedicated for the use of Black Catholics. In 1857, it became the Chapel of Blessed Peter Claver and, in 1864, it expanded into the Church of St. Francis, which was the first permanent Black parish in the United States.

Even after the foundation of the order, the Oblate Sisters’ experience continued to be permeated with challenges, beginning with the death of Joubert in 1843. The Sulpicians and the archdiocese essentially abandoned the sisters at the

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44 Morrow, Persons of Color and Religious at the Same Time, 8.

45 Gerdes, 188.

46 Sharps, 122.
same time they were experiencing internal discord and defection. Seeking a more regularized religious experience, Sister Theresa Maxis Duchemin left the order and founded the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Monroe, Michigan, with Redemptorist Father Louis Florent Gillet. Thirteen years later, Church politics, national rivalries, cultural division, and race prejudice drove Duchemin to a Canadian convent and her role as foundress was excised from her congregation’s written and oral records.47

The Oblate Sisters of Providence in Baltimore continued to demonstrate leadership and daring in the face of poverty, racism, humiliations, and untold hardship.48 In 1840, German Redemptorists, not yet acculturated to American racist influences, took the Oblate Sisters of Providence under their wing. Redemptorist priest, Thaddeus Anwander, literally begged Baltimore Archbishop Samuel Eccleston to keep the order intact. Eventually, the sisters would be supervised by the Jesuits and later by the Josephites, as the latter order’s charism is ministry to African Americans.49

Although the Oblate Sisters of Providence never participated in any overt abolitionist movements, they resisted the restrictions and social controls that white antebellum society sought to impose upon them. Through them, the Church was challenged to revise its conventional views of Black moral and intellectual capacities


49 Hennesey, 144.
and to accommodate an institutional Black presence.\textsuperscript{50} Though perhaps only a moment of tolerance or benign indifference in the history of Black Catholicism, the Oblate Sisters managed to accomplish their dual goals of establishing a religious community and serving as a source of education for the Black community in the antebellum South. Much of this was achieved through their relationship with and support of the Black laity. The Oblate Sisters of Providence still serve today in Maryland, Florida, New York, and Costa Rica, and maintain a motherhouse in Southwest Baltimore County, Maryland.\textsuperscript{51}

\textit{The Sisters of the Holy Family} Henriette Delille, a free woman of color, was born in New Orleans in 1812 and, by the time of her birth, free persons of color had expanded into a group large enough to form a definitive sector within Louisiana society. Delille had been educated by her mother and groomed to enter the \textit{placage} system. In 1832, however, Delille was affected by a religious experience and began to gather around her a group of pious women of color to work with the sick and the poor and to instruct the ignorant. Instead of participating in the \textit{placage system}, Delille openly opposed it. In doing so, it could be argued that she publicly waged her body for the freedom of the body of Christ and that, by transgressing the conventional expectations of her caste, social class, and gender, she symbolically seized the bodies of enslaved and other free women of color from sexual coercion.\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{50} Morrow, \textit{Persons of Color and Religious at the Same Time}, 274.

\textsuperscript{51} “History of Oblate Sisters of Providence.”

\textsuperscript{52} Copeland, \textit{The Subversive Power of Love}, 65.
In 1836, Delille used the proceeds of her mother’s estate to form the Sisters of the Presentation along with white patroness, Marie Jeanne Aliquot. This interracial order quickly failed due to legal as well as social pressures. Under the patronage of Father Etienne Rousselon, the Sisters of the Holy Family emerged in 1842, the second religious order in the United States specifically formed by and for African American women.\(^{53}\)

For the love of Jesus, Delille and the sisters became “humble and devout servants of the slaves,” however, these women of African descent became the primary agents of evangelization in nineteenth-century New Orleans.\(^{54}\) Although Delille faced racial, financial, and social obstacles throughout her religious journey, the Sisters of the Holy Family, as an order, were strong enough to survive later waves of racial polarization. The sisters continue to serve the youth, elderly, and infirm in Louisiana, Texas, Washington, D.C., Oklahoma, Alabama, Florida, Central America, and Africa. In 1988, Henriette Delille was the first United States native-born African American whose cause for canonization was opened. Pope Benedict XVI declared her “Venerable” on March 27, 2010.\(^{55}\)


Hierarchical Support for Slavery  The stories of Mother Lange and the Oblate Sisters of Providence and Henriette Delille and the Sisters of the Holy Family, are incredible accounts of resolve and courage, which occurred in an environment that was for the most part pro-slavery, anti-Black, and in many areas, anti-Catholic. One of the saddest aspects of this story, however, was that the Catholic Church in the United States was similarly pro-slavery and anti-Black. Despite the sluggish promulgation of the universal Church teaching in regard to domestic slavery, the American Catholic hierarchy could have taken preemptive action against a situation that was obviously sinful. Instead, the U.S. bishops collaborated with the American Catholic desire to be politically and civilly accepted and economically prosperous. By hiding behind official Church doctrine, which was arguably erroneous, most bishops cooperated in the perpetuation of chattel slavery.

The papal bull *Sicut Dudum*, issued by Pope Eugene VI in 1435, was the first explicit papal condemnation of the slave trade. Four hundred years later, in 1839, Pope Gregory XVI repeated the condemnation expressed by six of his predecessors in his apostolic letter *In Supremo Apostolatus*. Gregory XVI expressly prohibited any cleric or layperson from defending, publishing, or teaching, in public or private, anything that supported the trade. It was thought that John Forsyth of Georgia,

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Martin Van Buren’s Secretary of State, used the letter to fan the embers of anti-Catholicism. He alleged a sinister plot among British abolitionists and the papacy to support the candidacy of William Henry Harrison whom Forsyth believed would undermine Southern society.

In response to Forsyth’s accusation, John England, Bishop of Charleston (1820-1842), wrote 18 lengthy letters utilizing Scripture, Roman law, and medieval history in support of slavery or, as interpreted by some, denouncing abolitionism. He also emphasized that Pope Gregory’s letter condemned the slave trade while permitting domestic slavery. England argued that if the American hierarchy had interpreted the document otherwise, all slaves would have been manumitted.

England was considered one of the most progressive bishops in the U.S. because, in 1822, he had promulgated a diocesan constitution, which was a pioneering document in American Catholicism. England created conventions where laymen and clergy gathered to direct the course of the local church; it proved to be an innovation that was short lived in the antebellum period, yet was proven to be influential during the Second Vatican Council more than a century later.59 His arguments for slavery, however, were tenuous since all of his historic references recognized certain rights for slaves especially regarding marriage, family life, freedom from sexual exploitation, and even certain property rights. None of these rights existed in the system of slavery that occurred within the United States.60


60 Ibid., 46-47.
Paradoxically, England was an impressive proponent for the spiritual and, surprisingly, the educational care of slaves. In 1835, he opened a school for free Black children; seminarians taught the boys while the Sisters of Charity of Our Lady of Mercy taught the girls. After some of the city’s leading citizens protested the existence of a school for Blacks, it was closed, but reopened in 1841.\textsuperscript{61} England closed the school on the condition that Charleston closed all other religiously sponsored schools.\textsuperscript{62}

Another bishop who wrote in defense of the institution of slavery was Francis Patrick Kenrick, the Archbishop of Baltimore, Maryland (1851-1863), who found it a necessary means of keeping societal peace. He believed that Catholic slaveholders were not responsible for the evils of the slave trade since it existed prior to current times.\textsuperscript{63} Worse yet, were the attitudes and practices of Bishops Auguste Marie Martin, the first Bishop of Natchitoches (1853-1875), Louisiana, and Augustin Verot, Bishop of Savannah, Georgia (1861-1870). Bishop Martin found slavery to be a disguised blessing for the Africans due to the “barbarity of the ferocious customs of the cursed children of the race of Canaan.”\textsuperscript{64} Slavery afforded Blacks the means by which they received the Catholic faith and other material

\begin{footnotes}
\item[61] McGuinness, \textit{Called to Serve}, 38.
\item[63] Davis, \textit{The History of Black Catholics}, 49-50.
\end{footnotes}
necessities. Martin attempted to introduce a theological justification for slavery as something necessary for the conversion of the Black race. Bishop Verot blamed the abolitionists for pre-Civil war strife, attempting to show that “slavery had received the sanction of God, of the Church, and of society at all times, and in all governments.” Both bishops called for a more humane treatment of slaves; Verot actually recruited the Sisters of Saint Joseph of LePuy to teach Black children. They both naively thought that slaveholders could simultaneously nurture and intimidate their chattel.

Following the lead of their bishops, by and large, white Catholics accepted the condition of slavery. In the South, Catholic planters depended on slave labor and believed it was important to “get right with slavery” in order to be accepted and prosper. Even though one reason for Northern participation in the Civil War was to abolish slavery, most northern whites, especially recent Irish immigrants in competition with Blacks for jobs, were anti-Black. Even great Catholic thinkers of the time such as Orestes Brownson (1803-1876), opposed slavery, yet thought Blacks to be inferior to whites in every way.66

65 Davis, The History of Black Catholics, 53.

66 Ibid., 58-62.
The Courageous Few: Nineteenth-Century Catholic Resistance to Slavery

The nineteenth century was a period distinguished by an evolution of attitudes concerning the situation of African Americans and the reality of their circumstances. The birth of the century beheld a society where slavery was firmly entrenched and where few whites would argue against the inferiority of Blacks, slave or free, based on color prejudice. The middle of the century was a time when the morality of slavery came under serious scrutiny perhaps diminished only by the acute political and economic conflicts regarding slavery, which resulted in the Civil War. It was also a time where color prejudice based on the inferiority of Blacks was fortified by racism fueled by economic competition with a growing immigrant population.

Slavery in the United States was part of a bipolar system of color caste, in which even the lowliest of “whites’ enjoyed a status superior in crucial aspects to that of the most exalted Blacks. As the Irish poured into the country, they were initially treated as poorly as their Black counterparts. By both their willingness and their need to do the work otherwise subscribed to slaves or free Blacks, the Irish soon caused certain jobs to be considered “white man’s work.” In this way, Irish immigrants, though oppressed in their own country, eventually joined the oppressing class within America.67 This phenomenon, along with the coalition forged between the white southern elite and the white poor, allowed for the manipulation of white skin privilege to keep the white poor and Black poor from

forming a common cause. The end of the century witnessed the demise of slavery only to be replaced by the de facto discrimination and horror of Jim Crow. Within all of this, the Catholic Church, with few exceptions, followed societal leads rather than the promptings of the heart in imitation of Jesus Christ.

Despite racism within and outside of the Church, there were clergy and laity who swam against the tide. William Gaston (1778-1884) used his public office as United States Representative from North Carolina to espouse his Catholic beliefs in order to challenge racism as “the worst evil that affects the Southern part of our Confederacy.” In 1835, he led an incredible, yet unsuccessful, drive to give free Blacks the vote in North Carolina. Catholic priest Claude Pascal Maistre began preaching against slavery in 1862 in New Orleans. He was suspended for his remarks, yet ignored his suspension, which resulted in his parish being placed under interdict. Later that year, Maistre built another church, the Holy Name of Jesus, which was considered to be schismatic until reconciliation occurred after the Civil War. It was amazing that both Gaston and Maistre survived the conflagration considering their radical rebellion against the racism of the time. They would both

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69 Jim Crow was a racial caste system in place, particularly in the South and border states from 1877 through the mid-1960s, which included state laws and rules of etiquette designed to intimidate and subjugate Black Americans. David Pilgrim, “What Was Jim Crow?” Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia: Using Objects of Intolerance to Teach Tolerance and Promote Social Justice at Ferris State University, Missouri (2012), http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/what.htm/ (accessed March 11, 2017).

70 Ibid, 65.

71 Davis, The History of Black Catholics, 65.
prefigure and inspire other daring Catholics who would emerge to defend the true
tenets of their faith.

The Catholic Slave Experience  The experience of the slaves themselves,
although always entirely unjust, varied according to their specific situations.
Certainly, the level of indoctrination into the faith depended upon how serious their
masters were about Catholicism, although in some cases slaves were baptized while
owned by non-Catholics. Typically, slaves went to church with their masters and,
depending on the region, either sat with them or sat in the back of the church.
Those masters who were serious about religious education either brought their
slaves to instruction at churches or administered it at home where it was always
transmitted orally and taught during the day in an open setting to prevent rebellion.
How genuinely slaves embraced the faith, a faith that would usually be enforced
upon them, would vary as well.72

Transatlantic voyages and consequent bondage did not destroy the African
religious traditions, values, beliefs, or principles of the American slaves, Catholic or
otherwise.73 In the traditional religion of West Africa, the power of the gods and
spirits was effectively present in people’s lives, for good or ill, on every level —
environmental, individual, social, national, and cosmic. Aspects of reality seen as
impersonal from a modern viewpoint were not only personified but personalized,

72 Krebsbach, 149.
that is, placed within the context of social relationships.\textsuperscript{74} Black survival in slavery may be understood as related to “core beliefs,” which persisted in connection with their predominantly West African belief systems. These core beliefs became the prism through which Blacks of the diaspora, slave or free, assimilated the Christianity they encountered.\textsuperscript{75} While it is imprudent to claim a monolithic West African religion, shared core beliefs included faith in the gods and ancestors, the primacy of family and community over the individual, corporate worship, belief in the efficacy of prayers of the living to the dead, sacrifice to the gods, the idea of death as a passage to a greater life, and adaptability in religious practice.\textsuperscript{76} These core beliefs affirmed the “Providence of God,” which was the most essential attribute of a transcendent, benevolent God. Accordingly, in a hostile environment as brutal as slavery, survival was certainly grounded in an unyielding trust in God.

Religion was indistinguishable from daily life, and therefore principles were expressed naturally. Other fundamental values emanating from the core belief system were: courtesy, moral strength, ability to see the good, joy, and the avenging spirit (balance and nature,) which were all practiced within the extended family of all people. Black Catholics incorporated these ideals within their practice of Catholicism, even when their masters disrespected their worldview. These traditions, ingrained into the psyche of enslaved Blacks, would become the essence


\textsuperscript{76} Moore, “African American Catholic Women,” 160-161.
of Black Catholicism, representing the source of the critical gift which Black Catholics provide the Church in direct opposition to Western European ideals.\textsuperscript{77}

Black slaves shaped the Catholic religion they experienced. According to historian Albert Raboteau, “African styles of worship, forms of ritual, systems of belief, and fundamental perspectives have remained vital on this side of the Atlantic, not because they were preserved in a pure orthodoxy, but because they were transformed.”\textsuperscript{78} For example, the journal of Father Joseph Michel Paret, a priest who served rural families in antebellum Louisiana, described how enslaved African Americans fused tradition and religion in order to make sense of the world around them. According to Paret, the slaves to whom he ministered combined medicine, ghost lore, Voodoo, priests and preachers, as well as the Mass, in order to fully understand the condition of slavery and the potential for the freedom of life after death.\textsuperscript{79}

Enslaved Catholics appreciated the similarities between African spiritual rituals and Catholic rites. Albert J. Raboteau writes, “Catholic piety with its veneration of the saints, and use of sacramentals . . . offered a supportive context for the continuity of African religious elements in recognizable form.”\textsuperscript{80} Liturgical ritual in African religions, as well as in Catholicism, culminated in moments of

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{77} Posey, 12-15.
  \item \textsuperscript{78} Raboteau, \textit{Slave Religion}, 4.
  \item \textsuperscript{79} For more on Paret, Lori Renee Pastor, “Black Catholicism: Religion and Slavery in Antebellum Louisiana (PhD diss., Louisiana State University, 2005), 53-68.
  \item \textsuperscript{80} Raboteau, \textit{Slave Religion}, 88.
\end{itemize}
transparency between the worlds when the Divine intermingles with the human and life is transformed.”\textsuperscript{81} Catholic priests mixed the physical with the spiritual when they administered the sacraments, the tangible expressions of faith in oil, bread, water, and wine. No matter how repugnant his political views may be, the ministrations of the Catholic priest were considered to possess theological validity. Parishioners were not empty vessels to be filled uniformly with Church teachings and, as with all people, slaves expressed their spirituality in accordance with their perceptions of their relationships to the Church and to God as well as their social and political standing.\textsuperscript{82} The Mass, however, replete with elaborate vestments, incense, Latin chant, liturgical movement, and mystery evoked the light, color, music, rhythm, and splendor of West African celebrations and rituals.\textsuperscript{83}

\textit{Reconstruction and Its Aftermath} In the years after the Civil War, the moral dilemma of slavery was no longer a question for the American episcopacy. Rather than create a coherent policy for the evangelization of thousands of free slaves, however, the American Catholic hierarchy did next to nothing. This approach should not be surprising since during the previous seven provincial councils of American bishops (1829-1849), neither slaves nor African Americans were ever mentioned. Along with racist attitudes, this was a time that coincided with the early years of the immigrant Church and the hierarchy was focused on those

\textsuperscript{81} Pastor, 63.

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 77.

\textsuperscript{83} Moore, “African American Catholic Women,” 161.
predominantly Western European populations. In addition, the Church in the South was undeveloped in terms of institutional and human resources.\textsuperscript{84}

Martin J. Spalding, who was appointed Archbishop of Baltimore in 1864, believed that slavery was a great social evil but also felt that the emancipation of the slaves would result in harm to themselves. He believed that experience taught that liberated slaves became “miserable vagabonds, drunkards, and thieves.”\textsuperscript{85} Spalding, nonetheless, did have a genuine concern for the religious welfare of the African American population and advocated for a plenary council immediately after the war to specifically address the needs of the four million emancipated slaves. Spalding’s belief that the Church faced “a golden opportunity for reaping a harvest of souls, which neglected may not return,”\textsuperscript{86} was not shared by most of his fellow bishops. A proposed collection for support for missionary work among Blacks drew from New York Archbishop John McCloskey (1864-1885) the reply, “in no way was the conscience of the bishops of the North burdened in regard to the Black.”\textsuperscript{87} At the Second Plenary Council in Baltimore (1866), the bishops decided to reserve the evangelization of former slaves to themselves, which resulted in the proposition that religious communities, rather than dioceses, open schools and minister to Blacks. The bishops were furious about the Roman Curia’s proposal to establish an


\textsuperscript{85} Davis, \textit{The History of Black Catholics}, 117.

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid. 118.

\textsuperscript{87} Hennesey, 161.
ordinary to oversee this ministry on a national basis. Taking it upon themselves, unfortunately, most often meant that the bishops did virtually nothing for the freed slaves.

In keeping with the Council’s directives, Spalding urged Cardinal Herbert Vaughan of the English Mill Hill Fathers to come and work among the Black Catholics in his diocese, which they did in 1871. In a more expansive endeavor, in 1881, the Franciscan Sisters of Mill Hill, later known as the Franciscan Sisters of Baltimore, arrived in Baltimore from England to work among Blacks in the United States. They opened St. Elizabeth’s Home for Black orphans at the invitation of Baltimore Cardinal James Gibbons. The orphanage was built upon the earlier work of a Black woman, Mary Herbert, who first kept deserted infants and children in her home.

In 1893, under the leadership of John R. Slattery, S.J., the American members of the Mill Hill Fathers separated and became known as the Society of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart, known as the Josephites. The Josephites eventually became an interracial society of priests and brothers dedicated to the service of Black Americans. The assignment of religious orders or priests to Black Catholic communities, reinforced the idea that parishes need not care for Blacks and, as a result, Black Catholics were isolated from neighboring white communities. Due to

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88 “Canon Benoit Notes in His Diary the Situation of Blacks in the United States, 1875,” in Stamped in the Image of God,” 64.

89 Sharps, 124-125.

90 Davis, The History of Black Catholics, 131.

91 Dolan, 366.
this arrangement, when a religious order could no longer serve a Black Catholic community, ministry to that community would end.

**Black Catholic Clergy**

Racism kept young Black men from entering the priesthood, but some Black Catholics managed to be ordained prior to the twentieth-century. America’s first Black Catholic priests were the sons of an Irish American slaveholder, Michael Healy, and his mulatto slave, Mary Eliza. Because of an unexpected encounter with a young bishop, John Bernard Fitzpatrick, and due to Healy’s financial means, he was able to have his sons educated at the newly-established College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts. Healy’s children, therefore, benefitted from excellent educations, and generally avoided the obstacles associated with advancement due to race. James Augustine Healy eventually became Bishop of Portland, Maine, and Patrick Francis Healy, S.J., became the twenty-ninth president of Georgetown, the first Black president of a predominantly white university. Healy is credited with changing Georgetown from a small liberal college into a modern university, and therefore, is in some ways a “second founder.” Alexander Sherwood Healy, whose appearance was more African American than his brothers, nevertheless accompanied his bishop as a personal theologian to the First Vatican Council.

92 Davis, *The History of Black Catholics*, 146.


94 Ibid., 160-168.
Sherwood Healy became one of the most educated American priests of his time and used his studies abroad to complete his adoption of a new cultural identity; the Healys considered themselves Catholic rather than Black.95

Father Augustus Tolton (1854-1897), who was ordained a priest in Rome in 1886, became the first recognizable and admittedly Black priest in the United States. The son of slaves, Tolton, a pious, gentle, and unassuming man, was ordained after a series of disappointments and refusals. He returned to the states to minister in an extremely challenging environment and, after an initial outpouring of encouragement upon his ordination to the priesthood by both Blacks and whites in the city of Quincy, Illinois, Tolton became the object of jealousy and anger from the neighboring pastor. He transferred to Chicago, but it seemed that his ministry eventually debilitated him, leading to his untimely death.96 The cause for canonization for “Servant of God” Augustus Tolton was initiated in 2010 and remains in process.97

The first African American to attend seminary and be ordained in the United States was Charles Randolph Uncles, M.H.M., who was ordained in Baltimore in 1891. Uncles was a Mill Hill priest and a founder of the American Josephites in 1893. The first Black priests stood many trials and were often ostracized by the white

95 Ibid., 105-107, 116-118.

96 Davis, The History of Black Catholics, 154-161.

priests with whom they served while, at the same time, their white colleagues often
shunned white priests who associated with Black priests.98

**Black Catholic Laity**

On January 4, 1889, almost one hundred African American Catholic men
gathered at the White House to meet President Grover Cleveland. This momentous
occasion was the first time in the Catholic Church’s history in the United States that
Blacks had come together as a body and were consciously aware of themselves as a
group. The event transpired on the last day of the first Catholic lay congress in the
nation’s history for either Black or white Catholics, an event occurring less than a
quarter century after the end of slavery. The one individual responsible for this new
development was Daniel Rudd (1853-1933), newspaperman, lecturer, publisher,
and publicist, who some believed was “the leading Catholic representative of the
Negro race.”99 Thoroughly committed to Catholicism, Rudd believed that the
Catholic Church held the greatest promise for Blacks in the United States. Although
his loyalty was not uncritical, he believed that the Catholic principles of equality
before the eyes of God would eventually promote the cause of the Black race.100 The
first congress addressed education, employment, housing, and other issues vital to
Black Catholics. The five subsequent Black Catholic Congresses demonstrated


100 “Daniel Rudd Explains the Proposed Congress of Black Catholics, 1888,” in *Stamped in the Image of God*, 76.
beyond a doubt that not only a Black Catholic community existed but that it was active, devoted, articulate, and proud. Strong lay leadership remained a constant characteristic of Black Catholicism, which continues to depend on lay involvement as its life force. The congresses were an intellectual as well as a social success, thereby laying the foundation for future Black Catholic movements.\textsuperscript{101}

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, Black Catholic lay leaders continued to press on regardless of discriminatory practices. The militancy of clergy and laity and the concern for integration represented a new direction in Catholic thought and action during this era.\textsuperscript{102} In 1924, Federated Colored Catholics was created as an active group led by Black Catholics for Black Catholics. This group met five times between 1924-1931 in order to discuss labor relations, economic, and business issues, as they affected Blacks, and social conditions, including the question of public health and interracial relations. In 1932, the group split after a bitter and acrimonious quarrel centering on the ultimate control of the organization as a national body of Black Catholics. Two of the most important white figures in the history of the interracial movement, Rev. John LaFarge, S.J., and Rev. William Markoe, S.J., became major critics and opponents of the group’s leader, Thomas Wyatt Turner. According to historian Cyprian Davis, both distrusted the efficacy of Black leadership for the organization and wanted it to turn its attention to interracial harmony. They did not understand what it meant to be Black in a

\textsuperscript{101} Davis, The History of Black Catholics, 193-194.

hostile society and what it was like to belong to a Church that was universal in self-concept, but racist at the local level. At the local level, however, interracial councils, begun by LaFarge, did succeed in persuading numerous Catholics to join the cause of racial justice and civil rights.

Legacy of Katharine Drexel

The advancement of higher education for Black Catholics found tremendous support in Mother Katharine Drexel (1858-1955). Now Saint Katharine Drexel, she was born on November 26, 1858 in Philadelphia to wealthy banker Francis Anthony Drexel and his wife, Hannah Jane Langstroth Drexel. Drexel’s mother died five weeks after her birth, and her father remarried Emma Bouvier in 1860. The family atmosphere was permeated with a deep faith together with a vigorous and highly visible commitment to the Roman Catholic Church. The Drexel sisters, Elizabeth, Katharine, and Louise, were trained in domestic discipline and community outreach, yet their family mixed with an aristocratic, international set and had access to high-ranking Catholic clergy throughout their lives.

By the time of his untimely death in 1885, Francis Drexel had amassed a fortune rumored to range between $14 million and $20 million dollars, estimated in modern times to be at least $250 million, which he placed in trusts for his daughters

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103 Davis, *The History of Black Catholics*, 228.

104 Dolan, 369.

105 Butler, 193.
and their children. After his death, Katharine and her sisters toured the Dakotas and Minnesota and visited the homeland and living places of western people. After these personal visits, the Drexel sisters looked for ways to offset the enforced privations on reservation lands and encourage the spread of Catholicism.\textsuperscript{106} In 1887, during a papal visit with Leo XIII, Drexel requested that missionaries be sent to the marginalized people in America. Pope Leo XIII put Drexel to the test by replying: “Why not yourself become a missionary?”\textsuperscript{107} Two years later, Drexel entered the novitiate of the Sisters of Mercy but in order to maintain control of her wealth and charitable endowments, she was urged to establish her own religious order. In 1891, Drexel pronounced her religious vows as the first Sister of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People.\textsuperscript{108}

Drexel dedicated her life to both evangelizing and improving the lives of Native Americans and, later, African Americans.\textsuperscript{109} She viewed education as a tool for the upward mobility of both of these populations, and called for a society in which Native Americans, African Americans, and Caucasians melded into one race. Although hers was a demographic picture that led all people into whiteness, it emphasized societal unity through marriage and procreation across races, which was a sexual notion abhorrent to most white Americans of the early twentieth century.\textsuperscript{110} Paradoxically, within her own congregation, white sisters did not recruit

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., 194.

\textsuperscript{107} Davis, \textit{The History of Black Catholics}, 135.

\textsuperscript{108} Butler, 206-208.

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid, 222.
and live with Native Americans and African Americans in the convents of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament.\textsuperscript{111}

From its genesis, Drexel’s work with African Americans and Native Americans met with mixed reactions in American society. In 1891, on the very day of its consecration, St. Elizabeth’s motherhouse, located outside of Philadelphia, was the object of bomb threats. Many saw the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament as radicals, misguided at best and dangerous at worst. According to the late historian, Anne M. Butler, the institutional Church showed little inclination to endow the parishes and schools of African Americans and Native Americans.\textsuperscript{112}

In 1915, Joseph E. Blenk S.M., Archbishop of New Orleans, was encouraged by Professor Medard Hillaire Nelson to approach Drexel for a foundation in New Orleans. Archbishop Blenk consented and suggested the purchase of the former Southern University buildings, which had been abandoned by that university due to racial prejudice.\textsuperscript{113} Drexel purchased the site through a third party in order that her purposes would not be revealed until the property had been closed; she opened the Xavier Secondary School for Colored Students, both male and female, in September 1915. In 1917, a teacher’s training school with a two-year curriculum was added, which expanded in 1925 into a teacher’s college.\textsuperscript{114} In the same year, a liberal arts

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 226-227.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 224.


college was inaugurated, therefore, 1925 may be regarded as the founding date of Xavier University in Louisiana. In 1927, the College of Pharmacy opened and, in September 1933, the Graduate school was initiated.\textsuperscript{115} With few exceptions, the financial burden was borne by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament.\textsuperscript{116}

\textit{The Civil Rights Movement and the Catholic Church}

\textit{Responses to Segregation}  After the Second World War, the United States once again confronted the issue of racial segregation. This time, however, the Church was forced to confront a new determination and resolve among Black Catholics, particularly as their numbers continued to increase in both the South and in northern and western cities. In their 1943 pastoral letter, \textit{Discrimination and the Christian Conscience},\textsuperscript{117} the Catholic bishops stressed the nation’s obligation to recognize the political, educational, economic, and social rights of Blacks. At the same time, however, Blacks were still required to worship apart from white fellow Catholics.\textsuperscript{118} In a 1947 \textit{Commonweal} article, Black Catholic Alice Renard sadly

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\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 312.


\textsuperscript{118} Hennesey, 304-305.
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reported, “clergy and institutions can practice race discrimination with impunity.”\textsuperscript{119}

There were a few courageous bishops such as Bishop Vincent Waters (1945-1974) of the Diocese of Raleigh, North Carolina, who confirmed Black and white children together, insisted on having Black and white acolytes at masses at which he presided, and required the diocesan newspaper to cover the activities of Black Catholics and their parishes to the same extent as white parishes. The diocese was unprepared to accept desegregation, which Waters implemented in 1953, a year before the \textit{Brown} decision. Believing racial prejudice was a virus which “will not die out of itself, it has to be killed by being exposed to the light of Faith,”\textsuperscript{120} Waters courageously applied his convictions. Many agreed, while others found Waters to be a communist and a traitor to White Christianity.

Joseph Ritter, Archbishop of St. Louis (1946-1967), abolished segregation in Catholic schools in 1947 despite the threat of a lawsuit by seven hundred laypersons within his diocese. Stating that the “cross on the top our schools must mean something,”\textsuperscript{121} Ritter vowed to excommunicate those who sued him. Another courageous prelate in the area of civil rights was Patrick O'Boyle, Archbishop of Washington (1945-1973), who integrated that city's Catholics school in 1947, while adopting a gradual process for the desegregation of the diocese from 1948-1952.

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 304.


The Catholic journal, Jubilee, reported, however, that “with the exception of North Carolina only two parochial schools out of a possible 745 in the hard-core racist states of the deep South” were integrated. Archbishop Joseph F. Rummel (1935-1964) of New Orleans had one of the most difficult struggles and did not succeed in integrating Catholic schools in that city until 1962, after excommunicating three lay leaders and the local political boss for their resistance.122

*Catholics and the Civil Rights Movement* The aftershock of the 1954 Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* was felt throughout the Catholic community in varying degrees of importance; three years later, in “Racial Discrimination and the Christian Conscience,”123 the American bishops addressed racism as a moral issue for the first time and condemned segregation. They also injected a note of timid caution by seeking to create a balance between what they saw as a “gradualism that is merely a cloak for inaction,”124 and a “rash impetuosity that would sacrifice the achievements of decades of ill-timed and ill-conceived ventures.”125 The document came at the insistence of Pius XII, who sent a cablegram on the subject to the American apostolic delegate a day before he died.

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125 Ibid.
Fearing division among the bishops, the cablegram was suppressed and, if it had not been for Cardinal Patrick O’Boyle, the document would not have been issued.

What the bishops did not surmise was that, regardless of statements, the national situation had reached a point where a deliberate and well thought out series of incremental measures was no longer possible.

The lack of decisive action on the part of the bishops could be considered a primary reason for the proportionately low representation of Catholics in groups such as the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the NAACP, and the absence of Catholic youth at sit-ins and freedom rides. “Racial Discrimination and the Christian Conscience” lacked the specificity of Protestant statements, which called for the support of Brown, the integration of church facilities, and the effective extension of the Negro’s right to vote. Many contained explicit condemnations of the Klu Klux Klan, White Citizens Councils, and violent, lawless attacks on integration efforts. In addition, the tardiness of the Catholic response, as compared with earlier statements of twenty-one other major American Christian denominations, contributed to the lack of effective action.

By and large, therefore, Catholics, either Black or white, were not in the forefront of the Civil Rights movement or among the leadership of the protest organizations. Black priests were not in the vanguard of the grass-roots leader-

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ship that supported and followed Martin Luther King, Jr. on the local level. One reason for this was that few Black priests were in leadership positions in the early 1960s. Moreover, the notion that it was unseemly for clergy or religious to participate in public spectacles was still strong among Catholics.

The massive demonstration of Blacks and whites that was held at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC, on August 28, 1963 did include some Catholics as well as some Catholic organizations and religious communities. A short time after the leaders of the “Big Six” civil rights organizations began to plan the march, the sponsoring committee was expanded to include others, including Matthew Ahmann, representative of the National Catholic Council for Interracial Justice. Archbishop Patrick O’Boyle of Washington supported the event and offered the invocation. The Catholic reference point on the civil rights movement remained the interfaith groups of religious activists living in a metropolitan area.

A more significant change in general Catholic attitudes came in response to Martin Luther King, Jr.’s, call for all of the nation’s clergy to gather in Selma, Alabama, beginning on March 21, 1965. The vicious acts of state troopers, who attacked non-violent demonstrators crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge on March 7,
1965, rallied the nation and Catholics were no exception. One hundred twelve local Catholic Interracial Councils were mobilized and 44 U.S. Catholic dioceses were represented. Priests, nuns, and laypeople made the pilgrimage to Alabama in unprecedented numbers, adding a distinctive Catholic presence to the Selma protests. Delegates came from all regions; for example, the Syracuse, New York Catholic Interracial Council sent 13 members in a chartered plane, while the New York City contingent included 32 priests and seven laypeople including ten additional priests from Brooklyn.\textsuperscript{133} Sister Antona Ebo, who attended classes and who spoke at the IBCS in 2014, was the only black nun among the 900 Catholics who participated that day.\textsuperscript{134} Yet, Thomas Toolen, Archbishop of Mobile-Birmingham (1927-1969), deplored the inclusion of clergy and religious declaring that they should all be home “doing God’s work.”\textsuperscript{135} The Archbishop’s attitude demonstrated that many Catholic officials still considered the matter of racial injustice in America to simply be a social issue.\textsuperscript{136}

As the 1960s continued, more Catholic clergy and sisters, both Black and white, became engaged in the Civil Rights movement. Several factors may have

\textsuperscript{133} Paul Murray, “54 Miles to Freedom: Catholics were Prominent in 1965 Selma March,” \textit{National Catholic Reporter} (March 7, 2015), ncronline.org/…/54-miles-to-freedom-Catholics (accessed April 7, 2016).


\textsuperscript{136} McGreevy, “Racial Justice and the People of God,” 221; Davis, \textit{The History of Black Catholics}, 256.
sparked this evolution of involvement with the first significant influence being the convening of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). The national ferment aroused by the civil rights movement and the war on poverty coincided with a general excitement within the Church signaled by the innovating papacy of John XXIII and Vatican II. Many Catholics felt that they had been given “strong and additional warrants committing their best efforts to the secular society and to a war on the worst evils of society.” Gaudium et Spes, for example, took special notice of the unity and relationship of the “whole of humanity.” In addition, the Sister Formation Conference, which evolved into an organization in 1954, prepared sisters to interact with non-Catholics and racial and ethnic minorities, and the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice (NCCIJ) recognized that sisters could play a valuable role in the struggle for civil rights and created a department designed to channel women religious into this apostolate.

**The Church’s Response to the Civil Rights Movement** The deep religious divisions formed during the 1960s between Catholics were profoundly disturbing. Emerging from a time of Catholic doctrinal conservatism within

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138 Ibid., 81.

139 Ibid., 80.

140 McGuinness, *Called to Serve*, 162.

a period of tremendous institutional growth, neither the clergy nor local congregations were ready for the sweeping changes brought about by the Second Vatican Council. For Catholics interested in racial issues, three new themes proved central: the description of the Church as “the people of God,”\textsuperscript{142} a Church that would awaken its members to “the drama of misery and to the demands of social justice made by the Gospel and the Church,”\textsuperscript{143} and, finally, the formation of a global Church. At precisely the moment when American Catholics were reevaluating their roles in contemporary society, the national focus on issues of racism and urban poverty provided a mechanism for engagement with the world.

White Catholics were intensely divided with the more liberal in support of the civil rights movement, at least verbally, while others were outraged to see nuns and priests marching.\textsuperscript{144} One Cleveland reader wrote to the diocesan newspaper that coverage of events in Selma allowed “communist leaders . . . to divide the Catholic population.”\textsuperscript{145} Indeed, “segregation, birth control, and civil rights are issues that help to draw the expression of different Catholic spokesmen in order to destroy unity.”\textsuperscript{146} On the other hand, one sister wrote, “although many were shocked at the events in Selma, there has evolved more clearly the awareness that the Christian,

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\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 222. 223-224, 227.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 227.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., 230.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid.
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most of all the religious, belongs with those who have no power in this world.”

Parish meetings and gatherings to discuss or protest racism often drew hostile reactions as Catholics sparred internally over racism.

The assassinations of Malcolm X in 1965 and Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968 created the seismic force that moved African American priests to organize for the first time in order to protest racial inequality. The Catholic Clergy Conference on the Interracial Apostolate had scheduled its meeting in Detroit at the Sheraton-Cadillac Hotel for April 16-18, 1968. Father Herman Porter, a Black priest from the diocese of Rockford, Illinois, and Vice President of the organization, invited all Black priests in America to a special caucus at the time of that event. At least 60 Black priests met as a group for the first time in American history. According to Cyprian Davis, “It was a time of painful discovery and sometimes-bitter revelation as these priests dealt with the question of their personal and corporate responsibility in a time of racial crisis. For all it was a time of anger or of deep seated unease.”

The discussions eventually settled upon certain objectives, with the first among them being the formation of a permanent organization of Black priests that would include permanent deacons and religious brothers. For the immediate future, a decision was made to deliver a statement to the American bishops. The participants were wrenched between a genuine sense of loyalty to the Church and a sense of responsibility to the Black Community in a time of struggle and increasing

147 McGreevy, “Racial Justice and the People of God,” 228.
148 Sanders, 85.
149 Davis, The History of Black Catholics, 257.
militancy. The statement began with the confrontational assertion, \(^{150}\) “The Catholic Church in the United States, primarily a white racist institution, has addressed itself primarily to white society and is definitely a part of that society.”\(^{151}\)

The caucus made nine demands, which included: that Black priests be placed in decision making positions in their dioceses and the Black community; that Black priests be given the opportunity to work directly within the Black community; and that, in areas where Black priests were nonexistent, efforts were to be made to bring them in or that white priests who were of ‘Black thinking’ be chosen for ministry. In addition, greater efforts to recruit Black men for the priesthood were to be made; formation in Black ministry was to be established for white priests chosen to work within the Black community; a department was to be established in the USCCB under Black leadership for the affairs of African Americans; Black men, including married men, were to be chosen for the permanent diaconate; and, finally, each diocese would set aside funds on a permanent basis for the leadership training of Black laypersons.\(^{152}\)

The calling of the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus was a milestone in the history of the Black Catholic community. It created a solidarity among Black Catholic clergy that had never previously existed, representing a return to the Black Catholic initiative that had marked the Black Catholic lay congresses and the Federated Colored Catholics. This time, however, it was the clergy that seized the

\(^{150}\) Ibid., 258.


\(^{152}\) Ibid., 113-114.
initiative and, finally, instigated a change in direction on the part of the American Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{153}

In August, 1969, just as the Black priests formed themselves into a national body in response to the civil rights movement and the subsequent racial unrest in the nation, the Black Catholic sisters established the National Black Sister’s Conference at the University of Dayton in Dayton, Ohio. The sisters drew up a position paper in which they specified their goals as Black Catholic religious women. One of their objectives was to entreat the Church and religious congregations to respond with Christian enthusiasm to the need for eradicating white racism.\textsuperscript{154} Subsequently, in 1969, the National Black Catholic Seminarian Association was organized by Clarence Williams C.Pp.S. and, in 1970, the National Black Lay Catholic Caucus was formed in Washington, DC.

The action by these priests, sisters, seminarians, and laity sparked a change that would permanently affect the position of African Americans within the United States Catholic Church. In 1970, the National Office of Black Catholics was organized with its headquarters in Washington, D.C. It would serve as a clearinghouse and spokesperson for the four major Black caucuses and conferences: The National Black Clergy Caucus, the National Black Sisters Conference, the National Black Lay Catholic Caucus, and the National Black Seminarians Association.\textsuperscript{155}

\textsuperscript{153} Davis, \textit{The History of Black Catholics}, 258.


\textsuperscript{155} “National Office for Black Catholics, Black Perspectives on Evangelization of the Modern World, 1974” in “\textit{Stamped with the Image of God},” 121.
Just a few years after James Cone’s decisive work entitled *A Black Theology and Liberation* (1970), the Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA) sought to understand the affect and role of this new and challenging theological inquiry for Roman Catholic theology in the United States and for the CTSA. In 1973, they invited Professor Preston N. Williams to address the society on the relationship between Blacks and Roman Catholics. Williams, an African American Protestant ethicist and theologian at Harvard University, challenged the universality of the Catholic Church in the United States. He argued that the Church had not recognized or adapted to the culture of African Americans as it had eventually done for the Church in Africa, the Caribbean, and other American cultural groups of European descent.\(^{156}\) He asserted, “Black Americans need not become either Puritans or Irish. They ought to be able to maintain themselves as Roman Catholic . . . I am affirming that a universal church must be more than a Roman, a European, a German, or an American Church. It ought to be a universal Church and that means African and Black American as well as Mexican-American and Brazilian.”\(^{157}\)

Williams maintained that the Catholic Church did not have a strong or credible voice in the cause for racial justice because of its silence in social justice issues involving race. In addition, he cited the Church’s failure to embrace fully the concept of universalism thereby accepting an attitude of European or White hegemony as the norm for catholicity, which he felt represented a lack of genuine


\(^{157}\) Ibid., 24-29.
welcome and respect for African American culture within the American Catholic Church. For many African Americans, membership in the Roman Catholic Church, then and now, meant assimilation into a European White Catholic experience that negated the African American ethos. Williams challenged the CTSA to promote Black Catholic theological scholarship citing the considerable absence of African American Catholic leadership in seminaries, universities, the hierarchy of the Church, and as theologians. He chided white Catholics, noting that they did not educate themselves about the Black religious experience or the life of African Americans. This he felt was a weakness of the Catholic Church in America and an indicator of their arrogance of superiority.  

The CTSA response to Williams was to designate its only African American theologian and member, Rev. Joseph Nearon, S.S.S., to form a research committee to explore Black theology as it affected Roman Catholic theology. In 1974, Nearon gave his preliminary report to the CTSA that cited as most urgent Williams’ contention that Catholic theologians had little regard for the life and faith experience of African Americans and Black diasporas.  

An Institute for Black Catholic Studies

Nearon offered three fundamental questions regarding the Catholic Church to guide the proposed research: To what extent are African Americans correct in

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158 Williams, 24-29.

accusing us of having a racist theology? How can incorporation of the Black experience enrich Catholic theology? And, how can the Roman Catholic tradition contribute to the quest for Black liberation and identity? He challenged his colleagues and the Catholic Church by declaring that Catholic theology was racist, primarily by omission: the social and cultural experience of Blacks was outside the scope of Catholic theological reflection. He contended, “Blacks have been accepted (or more accurately allowed to join) to the extent that they assimilate to an already established cultural pattern. And no one ever even thought that the Black Catholic had something to contribute to Catholicism and especially to Catholic theology, as well as something to receive.”

In 1976, Nearon again addressed the CTSA with a report that affirmed the relationship between African Americans, Black theology, and Catholic theology. The statement addressed several issues Nearon thought were necessary for the development of a Black theology within the context of Roman Catholic theology. First, he noted that Catholics could make a contribution to Black Theology and, second, he claimed that there is an authentic African American approach to engaging Catholic theology, which is significant for the Black theological and Catholic theological discourse.” Nearon offered an analogy between Black Catholic theology and Black Protestant theology indicating that each is worthy of study and


\[161\] Ibid.
dialogue by white Catholic theologians. “Black theology, is an effort to understand the relationship between two realities: Black experience and the Christian faith.”

Nearon believed that one of the dilemmas for Catholic theology was the hierarchy’s critique of Black theology and Black theology’s lack of accountability to the hierarchy. Once the claim that Black theology was accountable to Black people and based on the repository of their experience is accepted, he claimed, the next dilemma for Catholic theology was the absence of Black theologians and Black bishops. The solution, for Nearon, was to appoint Black bishops to the magisterium who would have the cultural experience with which to judge Black theology within the context of Catholic theology.

Nearon also addressed concern for the tendency to universalize the particularity of race and culture in the Church, thus denying the unique identity and significance of people of color who are often marginalized. This, he cautioned, may lead to intensified racism when the contributions of the marginalized, in this case African Americans, are minimalized, not recognized, or appreciated because they are viewed in the content of the “melting pot” myth, which has excluded them. Nearon argued that the focus of the Catholic Church in America has been the millions of white Catholics from European nations who came to the U.S. and brought with them their priests and religious women who helped them maintain their cultural identity and spirituality while becoming assimilated into the American


163 Ibid., 177.
cultural fabric. The experience of African Americans was quite different since most arrived here as chattel with no one to speak on their behalf in the hierarchical Church until the 1960s or later. The Church was slow to recognize the gifts and spirituality of African American Catholics and to develop structures and programs to promote African American ordained and consecrated leadership. For Nearon, the inability of the Catholic Church to embrace the religion, spirituality, and culture of African Americans presented “a major problem for the elaboration of a Black theology in a Roman Catholic tradition.”

Nearon presented CTSA with three significant areas for a theological investigation of Black theology within the Catholic Church. The first was an understanding of the theology and the mystery of the Trinity. The affirmation of the “otherness” of God in the Trinity and mutuality of the three divine natures in one person offered a lens in which to see that the differences among human persons, while not negating their connectedness or commonality, does not indicate the exclusivity of some. Nearon concluded, “… because God is what he is, otherness is not destructive of unity but is the only way to constitute unity which is formed in the image and likeness of God.”

The second investigation was the role of the local community as a result of the decentralization of the Church after Vatican II and the publication of Lumen Gentium. In Chapter Two, #28 of Lumen Gentium (The Dogmatic Constitution on the

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164 Ibid., 191.

165 Ibid., 192.
Church) promulgated by Pope Paul in November, 1964, the presence of Christ and the universal Church in the local community was clarified. This, he believed, was an opportunity to foster a greater unity in diversity because of the document’s focus on the local community—parish or diocesan—as the place where the Church is realized, rather than concentrating on the national or universal Church. Nearon wrote: “The religious dimension of Black culture presupposes a different world outlook from that of the dominant culture and its expression will be different. In an ecclesiology, which operates from the top down, it is difficult to assimilate this difference.” On the other hand, he contended, an ecclesiology which starts with the local community, accepts diversity as a given, and seeks to find true unity through this diversity rather than imposing uniformity from the top, is necessary. Such an ecclesiology will understand that unity is not something over and above or along with diversity but that it is constituted in diversity.”

The relationship between Black theology and liberation theology was Nearon’s third area of investigation. He affirmed that Black Theology is liberation theology calling for the liberation of oppressed Black people. In addition, the methodology of liberation theology provided Black theology with an investigative framework that focused on areas such as the social sciences rather than philosophical inquiry. Nearon maintained that liberation theology is most often


168 Ibid.
associated with Latin American theology, and while Latin Americans, like African Americans, speak of oppression, there was a difference between liberation theology and Black theology. The difference was that the nature of Latin American oppression is most often focused on economic justice, whereas Black theology’s oppression is attributed to racial injustice.”\textsuperscript{169}

Nearon identified three categories for discussion about oppression: the oppressed, oppressor, and the free. If the matter is approached from the viewpoint of sociology, it becomes apparent that in a society of oppressed and oppressors, no one is free. Such a society is as dehumanizing for the oppressors as it is for the oppressed. Indeed, it may well be more dehumanizing for those in oppressing groups; the oppressor is not only not free, but does not know he is not free. The oppressor does not have as self-image the fact that he is oppressor.\textsuperscript{170}

The benefit of this approach to Black theology is its ability to derive from liberation theology a way to understand the sin of racism as a social reality and not merely as an individual transgression. In connecting the sin of racism to redemption and salvation, Nearon raised these theological principles from the conversion of the individual to the affect and conversion of humanity and society.\textsuperscript{171}

Joseph Nearon was among the founding committee members of the Institute for Black Catholic Studies (IBCS). The depth and breadth of his theological acumen was absorbed within the philosophy of the then nascent institute, which was

\textsuperscript{169} Ibid., 195.

\textsuperscript{170} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{171} Ibid.
established for the benefit of Black Catholics throughout the United States as well as for the welfare of the entire Church. The issues that Nearon raised before the CTSA remain to be resolved; however, the establishment of a permanent Institute created the instrument necessary to challenge these critical concerns. Over the past 36 years, the IBCS has contributed to an inestimable increase in awareness of the Black Catholic experience and its gift to the Church. Because of the IBCS, Black Catholics and those who serve them, have advanced in their ability to appropriately and effectively respond to the needs of the community as well as share the vast legacy of Black Catholicism with the American Church. The following two chapters trace the development of the IBCS from the time of its inception until the present. The Institute has evolved as a center for Black Catholicism in the U.S. and currently stands on the threshold of making a significant impact on racial reconciliation and solidarity in the American Church.
Chapter Two

The Emergence of the IBCS—From the Maelstrom of the Civil Rights Era (1978-1993)

In 1969, still stunned by the death of Martin Luther King, Jr., a few members of the nascent National Black Catholic Clergy Conference (NBCCC) met to discuss current religious and societal conditions. Those attending the meeting voiced concerns regarding the future of Black Catholics in a society rife with racism and in a Church marked by ministerial indifference. At one point in the conversation, Rev. Augustus Taylor, a priest from the Archdiocese of Pittsburgh Pennsylvania, wrote a series of ideas on a napkin intended for consideration by the NBCCC.\(^1\) Taylor proposed a structured academic program through which Black Catholic viewpoints could be shared among members of the Black Catholic community as well as the broader Church. The NBCCC was in its infancy and, therefore, the organization was not able to actualize the idea at that time. Nine years later, however, circumstances would be appropriate to revisit this important idea, although the formal proposal would surface from a newly formed organization.\(^2\)

Encouraged by the discussions within the NBCCC and under its auspices, Rev. Thaddeus Posey O.F.M. Cap. and Rev. David H. Benz convened the first Black Catholic Theological Symposium (BCTS) in 1978 at the Motherhouse of the Oblate Sisters of


\(^2\) Copeland; “History,” 3.
Providence, Baltimore, Maryland. In planning this event, Posey worked in association with Rev. Augustus Taylor and consulted with Rev. Joseph Nearon and Sister Jamie Phelps, O.P. Their efforts brought together Black Catholic priests and vowed religious women and men trained as pastoral and intellectual leaders in the various theological and ecclesial disciplines and dedicated to the advancement of Black Catholics. Participants presented formal papers that addressed some of the topics crucial to the development of a distinctively Black Catholic theological and pastoral response to current conditions within the Church. These topics included values, self-concept, liturgy, catechesis, and spirituality.

Those in attendance discussed Black theology as content for both African American Catholic identity and religiosity in the Catholic Church in the United States. A synthesis of Black theology and Catholic theology, tradition, ecclesiology, and experience was articulated thus forging a unique concept of African American Catholic theology. The participants affirmed the compatibility of a Black Catholic theology that was both constitutive of the African American experience and truly Catholic.

The papers from this meeting were edited under the direction of Posey and published as *Theology: A Portrait in Black*. In addition, Posey prepared the

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3 Significantly, this meeting was held at the hub of the first Catholic religious organization of vowed Black women.

4 “History,” 1.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.
preface of the Symposium’s proceedings. Within this preface, Posey asserted that:

The Black approach to theology is rooted in a positive identification and creation. It is positive because we affirm ourselves, our history and our destiny in the faith . . . until recently, the Church has not encouraged this through identification among Black Catholics . . . the question of Black Theology has for some time produced tension in the Catholic Church. This tension stems from many levels of uncertainty about both parts of the term: BLACK and THEOLOGY. Too often Black and thus Black consciousness within the Church is identified with hatred, violence, and separatism.7

Posey aligned the experience of African American Catholics with African Americans in general and spoke of their shared history, culture, and experience of God. “As Black Americans, we have a history as a people, our own aspirations, longings and desires; our own expressions, traditions and culture. We are in no way a dark mirror of white society.”8 He situated Black theology in the classical understanding of theology as “faith seeking understanding.” Black theology, therefore, was to be seen as a natural response of Christianity and its relationship to the Divine. Like James H. Cone and other African American Protestant theologians, Posey agreed that Black Catholics have a role in the raising of consciousness regarding racism in the Catholic Church and Christianity in the United States.9 He understood that only a Catholicism viewed through the lens of the African American experience could be liberating and, therefore, inspire Black Catholics to act against oppression.


8 Ibid., 3.

9 Ibid.
In the introduction to the published symposium papers, Father Joseph Nearon emphasized the particularity of blackness within the universality of the Church, and conjoined faith and heritage as a way to understand how Black people had significantly enriched the Church. He emphasized that Catholics of African descent are indispensable in assisting the Church in the United States to reflect the Church of Pentecost. Nearon observed at the symposium,

We are here because we are Black and we are here because we are Catholic theologians and we are here because we feel impelled to be close to our people and to be close to our Church... We are here to examine our heritage in the light of our faith and strive to articulate our faith in the light of our heritage. We do this as a contribution to our people, but we also do it as contribution to our Church.¹⁰

Nearon challenged the limited view of the universality of the Church, which he argued equated unity with uniformity. He believed that the American Catholic Church had little understanding or appreciation of the particularity of African American spirituality and heritage because the Church did not see Black diversity in the same way it viewed and accepted the diversity of European or white Catholics. This fear and suspicion made it particularly difficult for white American Catholics to embrace and acknowledge African American Catholic identity and to see it as part of the universal Catholic Church. “...I honestly think that the American Churches in many ways are afraid of Black religion,” wrote Nearon. He claimed that the Black style of preaching and use of Gospel music was suspected as being “Protestant.” This suspicion required reflection because it was at the center of a Black approach

¹⁰ Joseph Nearon, introduction to Theology: A Portrait in Black, 6.
to ecclesiology; “the objections that Black ways of expressing the Christian mystery are too Protestant are really a camouflage. The real problem is blackness.”

As a result of the first gathering of the BCTS and the publishing of Theology: A Portrait in Black, Posey, with the encouragement of other BCTS participants, presented a second proposal to the 1979 spring meeting of the Board of Directors of the NBCCC. This plan called for the establishment of an educational institute with a curriculum organized around the pastoral and intellectual needs of Black Catholics and under their leadership and direction. The atmosphere of approval for such a project reflected the mindset of the larger Catholic community at the time as it occurred the same year that Brothers and Sisters to Us: The U.S. Catholic Bishops Pastoral on Racism in Our Day was promulgated by the USCCB. The letter identified racism as “a radical evil that divides the human family and denies the new creation of a redeemed world, that must be healed by an equally radical transformation in our minds and hearts.”


11 Nearon, Theology: A Portrait in Black, 6-7.

12 “History,” 1.

Phelps, O.P., Posey drafted the proposal and presented it to the board of the NBCCC.\textsuperscript{14}

The proposal began with a quote from the 1967 encyclical of Paul VI, \textit{Populorum Progressio} (On the Development of Peoples):

\begin{quote}
We want to be clearly understood: the present situation must be faced with courage and the injustices linked with it must be fought against and overcome. Development demands bold transformations, innovations that go deep. Urgent reforms should be undertaken without delay. It is for each one to take his share in them with generosity, particularly those whose education, position, and opportunities afford them wide scope for action. It is the ferment of the gospel which has roused and continues to arouse in man’s heart the irresistible requirements of his dignity.\textsuperscript{15}
\end{quote}

The proposal continued:

Despite a long history of Catholicism’s involvement with Black people, it had not developed significant roots or established a tradition that marks the difference between vitality and growth and a lingering existence. By and large, it has involved itself with and related to Black people just as white society in general. Racism is the epithet that has been applied to the United States Catholic Church at every level.\textsuperscript{16}

The group argued that there was a need to establish the Institute for Black Catholic Studies (IBCS) in order to give the Black Catholic community scope to work with imagination and love in the re-creation of the Church. The primary purpose of the IBCS was to research and promote Black cultural values and contributions to

\textsuperscript{14} Benz, et al, 5; “History,” 2.

\textsuperscript{15} Pope Paul VI, \textit{Populorum Progressio} (Encyclical of Pope Paul VI on the Development of Peoples), secs. 31-33 (March 26, 1967), \url{http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html} (accessed March 11, 2017).

\textsuperscript{16} Benz et al, 1.
Christianity in America. The Institute’s goal was to educate Black Catholics and the Church at large in these areas.\footnote{Ibid., 1-2.}

The proposal expressed from the onset the belief that Xavier University would permit the optimal development of the Institute’s objectives, as it was the only educational institution whose very existence embodied the “soul” of Black Catholics. The Institute was understood to be another essential phase in the effort to liberate Black people. It was believed that it could renew the credibility of the Church in the Black community and aid in liberating the Church from the racism that permeated it. The founders of IBCS expected it to be a valid and urgent response to the Gospel in their times.\footnote{Ibid., 3.}

The goals and objectives of the Institute were: 1) To generate innovative and creative research on Black Catholic history and culture; 2) To provide a resource center for Black Catholic Studies, collecting and housing documents and materials on the life of Black Catholics throughout the history of America; 3) To more effectively utilize the Black clergy, religious men and women, and lay talents in facilitating instruction of the people serving in the Black community; 4) To provide a forum for Black Catholic theologians to study, reflect, and discuss, as well as instruct, train, and sensitize other clergy, religious, and lay persons to the concerns of Black Theology; 5) To create research projects, seminars, and scholarly newsletters on current theological problems from a Black perspective; 6) To
develop new leadership among Blacks, particularly Black Catholic youth; 7) To create a network of communication between Black Catholic theologians and the theologians of the third world; and 8) To develop innovative ministries in the Black community that were comprehensive enough to incorporate Black culture, foster Black culture, and foster Black liberation contributing to spiritual rebirth, human survival, and economic, political and social development of Blacks in America.\textsuperscript{19}

The structure of the proposed institution would consist of: 1) Annual workshops, developed to foster ministry, leadership, and spiritual growth for Black Catholics and those working in the Black community; 2) Annual seminars that would be sponsored for credit or non-credit on topics of Black life and theology significant to the scholarly community; 3) A resource center, development of a library of scholarly periodicals, bibliographical references, documents, private papers, manuscripts, and materials pertinent to Black Catholic life; and 4) Both a degree and certification program in theology and/or ministry, which would afford an opportunity for internship and research. Certification for religious education (CCD) and classes (non-degrees) in culture and ministry would supplement the Institute’s endeavors.\textsuperscript{20}

The committee did not expect implementation of the entire proposal in the first year, but believed in an evolving program with regular evaluations. Members suggested a process to develop the Institute in three steps: 1) A resource center

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 2-3.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 4.
would be established offering summer classes in Black theology, which would require space and a coordinator; 2) Seminars/workshops/symposiums would be conducted that would require planning and facilities; and, finally, 3) A full degree program would be established.\textsuperscript{21}

The proposal concluded with the statement:

The fulfillment of the Black Catholic dream of progress and liberation hinges in part on the intellectual advancement of the Black people in the Church and in the United States of America. The Institute seeks to address the fundamental question of what it means to be Black and Catholic in the United States of America, past and present, and Ultimately what it means to be American. There are important functions, which the Institute can serve within the context of Xavier University. The magnitude and significance of this task, although scholarly in nature, exceeds the boundaries of the academic. A Black center of intellectual endeavor can only have a beneficial effect on the Church at large in its effort to teach those disciplines essential to life and culture. The Institute for Black Catholic Studies will play a most useful role in shaping the Church teaching in the United States.\textsuperscript{22}

The NBCCC board agreed that Xavier University in New Orleans, Louisiana, which was the only Black Catholic University in the western hemisphere, was the most likely site to accredit and accommodate the program. Posey met with Xavier University President, Norman C. Francis in order to explore hosting an educational institute at Xavier that would focus upon the pastoral and theological needs of Black Catholics.\textsuperscript{23} Francis, and the University board immediately offered support for the Institute, stating that, “Historically, Xavier was founded with a commitment to

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 5.

\textsuperscript{23} “History,” 2.
strengthening Black Catholicism, and establishment of such a center would reaffirm Xavier’s continued role in developing leadership among Black Catholics.”

The University board also instructed Posey to form a consultant group for the project. Members of the group included the Rev. David H. Benz, Rev. Edward B. Branch, Sister Jamie Phelps, and Sister Toinette M. Eugene. Meanwhile, Francis, along with Posey, convened the Black Bishops along with Bishops from the New Orleans region to dialogue with Xavier administration and faculty regarding the University’s willingness to host the Institute. At that meeting, Sister Jamie, then a doctoral student at Catholic University, gave a presentation on the significance of such an educational program for the Church in its ministry to Black Catholics.

The result was a pilot program at Xavier, which was initiated during the summer of 1980 and included sixteen students and three faculty members: Rev. Cyprian Davis, O.S.B., Church History; Rev. Joseph Nearon, S.S.S., Black Approaches to Scripture; and Sister Toinette Eugene, Black Approaches to Religious Education. As they embarked on their new venture, the faculty outlined several hopes for the Institute: 1) Permanent status for the Institute; 2) Implementation of a program offering courses toward a master’s degree in Black Catholic Studies; and 3) The building of a center that Black Catholics would want to visit, which would house

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24 “Xavier Black Catholic Center?” *This Week at Xavier* 9, no. 25 (July 1, 1980): 1-2, IBCS 1978-1980, XULA Archives and Special Collections.


26 Ibid.

27 Ibid., 2.
historical archives and a research center. Posey served as the founding Director of the Institute.28

**From Pilot Program to an Established Institute**

After a successful pilot, the Institute was prepared for its first official summer. A January 13, 1981 memo from Xavier Academic Dean, Sister Rosemarie Kleinhaus to Posey defined the program. All courses, with the exception of Nearon’s two-credit course, Black Approaches to Scripture, would meet for three hours a day and would include Black Approaches to Theology by Rev. Wilton D. Gregory; Catechetics by Sister Toinette Eugene; African Philosophy and Spirituality, by Rev. Moses Anderson; Black Folk Scholars, with Sister Thea Bowman and Rev. Joseph Nearon; and Liturgical Planning and Development, with Clarence Rivers.29

At the end of the first session, evaluations were given to the students, which became a practice that continues through today. At the first gathering, students requested: an extension of the two-week Institute so that all papers could be completed on campus, permission to take more than one class, on-campus housing, more spiritual, social, and other community building activities among the students, and more interaction with the faculty. There were some organizational and communication gaffs, but the students praised the faculty, reported that they enjoyed the IBCS experience, and expressed a desire to return. They additionally

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proposed that the IBCS administration generate more expansive publicity. This evaluation was the first of a continual series of assessments that generally praised the faculty while asserting the need for both more administrative coordination and extensive publicity.  

From the onset, the NBCCC recognized that if the “‘pilot program’” were to expand and thrive, the administration and faculty needed to be open to critique and feedback from consultants and advisors equipped with a wide range of perspectives and expertise. To facilitate this process, Posey drafted a plan for a committee of the IBCS administrators, faculty, and student representatives, together with appropriate Xavier University administrators, in order to work out policies for the Institute regarding curriculum, degree and certificate requirements, faculty hiring, and student admissions.  

The Committee was the precursor of the IBCS Policy Committee. In addition, an Advisory Committee was formed comprised of prominent African American Catholic laity, religious, and clergy who would support the IBCS in fiscal, recruiting, and public relations matters. Dr. Norman Francis pledged the support of the Institute by Xavier University and clarified that the Institute was a presidential priority.  

In February 1981, Francis officially asked Nearon to chair the Department of Theology at Xavier. Nearon joined the faculty in 1982 and assumed the Directorship

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30 Meeting of First Graduating Class with Fr. Posey, July 1982, IBCS 1981-1984, XULA Archives and Special Collections.


32 Ibid.
of the Institute while Posey served as Assistant Director. In 1981, the National Black Sisters’ Conference (NBSC) designated a committee comprised of Sisters Elizabeth Hams, H.V.M, Rosetta Brown, O.P., and Patricia Haley, S.C.N. in order to explore and initiate a program to support Black candidates for consecrated life, as well as vowed religious, seminarians, and clergy in their spiritual journey. One component of this program was to take place at the Institute. In consultation with Sister Jamie Phelps, the NBSC committee designed and inaugurated the first session of the “Formation Program,” which was directed by Sister Patricia Haley and funded by the NBSC.\textsuperscript{33}

In February 1982, the Board of Trustees of Xavier University approved the interdisciplinary curriculum design of the Master’s Program in Pastoral Theology. This action empowered the IBCS to initiate the Degree Program, which would be accredited and awarded through the University’s Graduate School. The faculty was expanded to include, among others: Sister Thea Bowman, F.S.P.A., who offered the courses African American Literature and Preaching, Rev. Bede Abram, O.F.M. Conv. who replaced Sister Toinette Eugene as instructor of Black Approaches to Theology, together with Sister Delores Harrall, S.N.D de Namur, who taught Catholic Education in the Black Community.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 3-4.

\textsuperscript{34} “History.” 2.
Institutional Structures

In 1983, a formal agreement was finalized between Xavier University and the NBCCC regarding the IBCS. The purpose of the IBCS was to be a resource and research center for the study of the Black Catholic community in the United States, both past and present, as well as to contribute to the future development of that community. Black Catholics participating at the Institute were to share the treasures of their own faith and tradition with the entire American Church. The means envisioned to accomplish this purpose included an academic program leading to a Master’s degree in Theology, a resource and research center designed to assemble a national archive of Black Catholicism, special programs in Black Catholicism to be presented at the Institute and around the country, and more effective training of ministers who worked within the Black Catholic community. It was confirmed that the Institute would be centered at Xavier University and that IBCS would operate under the joint sponsorship of Xavier and the NBCCC.  

At that point in time, the agreement mentioned that the IBCS had actualized only the academic program in the following ways: 1) Offering a series of courses as a pilot program in 1980; 2) Hosting an “Opening Celebration for the Institute;” 3) In the Summer of 1981, offering a second series of courses; 4) Hiring Nearon as a Professor in the Department of Theology at Xavier in order to provide a more stable link between the University and IBCS; 5) On February 1, 1981, the Graduate Council of Xavier approved the proposal of NBCCC that students completing the

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requirement of the Academic program at IBCS be awarded the Th.M. degree by Xavier University; and 6) in the Summer of 1982, the third series of courses was offered as an integral part of the graduate offerings of Xavier University.\textsuperscript{36}

Because the Institute had become a reality, it was thought necessary to more carefully delineate the relationship between Xavier University and NBCCC as co-sponsors of the IBCS. Among the rights and responsibilities of Xavier and NBCCC were: 1) The IBCS was to remain headquartered on the Xavier Campus; 2) Programs and policies of the IBCS would require the concurrence of both the University and NBCCC; and 3) Academic programs and degree requirements would follow policies and practices of Xavier exactly. NBCCC could demand more stringent requirements but could not relax established procedures or requirements for students, faculty, or courses; 4) Faculty salaries and stipends, incidental and overhead expenses connected to teaching, and other financial arrangements would be the responsibility of the University; and 5) Expenses attendant upon national publicity or recruitment of faculty would be the responsibility of NBCCC.\textsuperscript{37}

The Director of IBCS would be a full time, ranked member of the Department of Theology and of the Graduate School Faculty of Xavier University whose appointment would be approved by the University and the NBCCC, and who would report to both of those organizations. The University would make academic determinations, while budgetary considerations would be determined by mutual

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 2.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 3-4.
agreement between the University and the Executive Board of NBCCC.\textsuperscript{38} The Associate Director would be an authorized representative of NBCCC who would be responsible for preparing and disseminating publicity for the annual program in communication with the Director and the Public Relations personnel of the University. The Associate Director would also be responsible for each session’s course offerings and recruitment of faculty, and would be an on-site coordinator for the administrative details of the Institute.\textsuperscript{39}

Faculty would be competent scholars in the area in which they were contracted to teach. Ordinarily, faculty members would possess the earned doctorate or its equivalent in their areas of specialization. The University maintained the right to waive this requirement in particular cases and could reject any proposed member of the faculty according to its established policies and procedures.\textsuperscript{40} Additionally, faculty members, with the exception of the Director and Associate Director, would be issued contracts by the University and the ordinary stipend and other benefits for lecturers would be paid by the University to the IBCS faculty. All expenses, aside from room and board, would be the responsibility of NBCCC or the faculty member.\textsuperscript{41} Students would be subject to all the rules of the graduate school and any IBCS rules approved by the University.\textsuperscript{42} NBCC would

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 4-5.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 5-6.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 6.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 6-7.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 7.
maintain the exclusive right to propose programs and the individual courses comprising the program; however, the Graduate Council of the University would alone have the right to approve the entire program, each individual course, and course requirements.\footnote{Ibid., 8.}

In November 1983, Louis Catenell, Dean of the Xavier University Graduate School, sent an inter-office memo to Nearon informing him that the IBCS “is held in high regard by those individuals who attended a major planning session at Xavier on November 9, 1983. In brief, you and your colleagues are recognized as an important part of our revitalization.”\footnote{Louis Castenell to Joseph Nearon, November 11, 1983, IBCS 1981-1984, XULA Archives and Special Collections.} The growth of the Institute and the superior nature of the faculty were assets acknowledged by the University and, due to its influence, the Joint Conference of the NBCCC, the NBSC and the NBCSA were to meet at Xavier in the summer of 1984.\footnote{Antoine M. Garibaldi, "The Revitalization of Teacher Education Programs at Historically Black Colleges: Four Case Studies," Southern Education Foundation (August 1989): 17-21.}

By the Spring of 1984, the summer courses planned for that year included: Black Approach to Theology with Bede Abram; Black Approach to Scripture with Joseph Nearon; Black Religion and the Arts, Preaching, Spirituality of Black Literature, and Spirituals by Thea Bowman; Spiritual Direction and Formation, by Dolores Harrall and Bede Abram; and Leadership Styles of Ministry and Urban/Rural Ministry (Empowerment) by Charles Payne.\footnote{IBCS Summer Listings advertisement to National Catholic Reporter, April, 1984, IBCS 1981-1984, XULA Archives and Special Collections.} Additionally, Cyprian
Davis would offer The History of Black Catholicism and History of Black Religious Movements in the Modern Period; and Wilton Gregory would teach Sacraments, Principles of Liturgy and Black Celebration. From this point until 1990, Cyprian Davis served as a kind of internal academic dean to ensure the Institute's scholarly and pastoral integrity.47

On June 7, 1984, Nearon, ill with viral encephalitis, suffered a stroke and died in Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia. A news release prepared by Rev. Anthony Schueller, S.S.S., indicated that “at the time of his death Nearon was collaborating with other theologians in formulating a pastoral letter from the nation's nine Black Catholic bishops on the experience and contributions of Black Catholics within the American Church.48 What we Have Seen and Heard: A Pastoral Letter on Evangelization from the Black Bishops of the United States” was promulgated three months after his death.49

Nearon did not live to see the first students graduate from IBCS in July of 1984. The graduates were Sister Eva Marie Lamas, S.S.S., Sister Addie Lorraine Walker, S.S.N.D., and Reverend James Volker.50 Prior to his death, Nearon

47 IBCS 1984 Summer Listings; “History,” 3.


50 “History,” 2.
had advocated the expansion of educational components within IBCS through supporting the efforts of graduates Lamas and Walker. Sisters Eva Marie and Addie, in consultation with Rev. Bede Abram, collaborated on their practicums to form the Master Catechist Certificate Program (IMANI), which was a training and formation program for Christian educators and catechists ministering to the Black community. In the early years, this program was funded through grants from the NBSC. Over time, Sisters Eva Marie and Addie contributed a great deal to both the IBCS community and the Black Catholic community in general. Father Voelker, a white priest, returned to his predominantly African-American parish in East St. Louis. Voelker served as pastor there for many years and continued to minister as a pastor in African American communities until his recent “semi-retirement.”

After Nearon’s death, Rev. Bede Abram assumed the role of Interim Director of the Institute and Posey remained Assistant Director. Posey met with the first graduates for an evaluation, that is, Process Night. Once again, the graduates called for more expansive publicity of the Institute’s holistic programs. The graduates additionally recommended a specific class for white ministers in Black communities (eventually taught by Father James Voelker), as well as one for Black ministers on how to gain support and keep balance in ministry. From the beginning, the IBCS

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53 “History,” 3.

54 Father Posey speaks to First Graduating Class, July 1983, IBCS 1981-1984, XULA Archives and Special Collections.
encouraged multiracial collaboration towards the goal of effective ministry within the Black Catholic community.

**The Early Years of Institutional and Programmatic Development: 1985-1993**

The years 1985 through 1993 were a time of institutional and programmatic development for IBCS. In January 1985, Francis invited Rev. Edward Braxton to be a candidate for the Directorship of IBCS. Throughout the following six months, Braxton spoke with Francis, interim director Abrams, and others in order to discuss his objections to the position, which were: fundraising, teaching undergraduate courses, living alone in the “Institute House,” lack of secretarial support, and uprooting himself for what could be a short-term position. Believing that there was considerable flexibility in the relationship between the Institute and the University, Braxton brainstormed with Francis and, as a result, wrote a descriptive proposal for a National Black Catholic Institute, which he based upon the Mexican American Cultural Center in San Antonio, Texas. Braxton additionally drafted a fundraising letter for the Institute, in order to inform and seek funding from both Black Catholic bishops and others. He also composed a letter to diocesan bishops, heads of Catholic organizations, foundations, and individuals asking them for financial support. The letter to Black bishops and other leaders emphasized the urgent need to strengthen and expand the current program, secure both a professionally qualified full time Director and adequate support staff, and maintain a broad base of financial support. Dioceses would be asked to become sustaining supporters along with the local

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55 “History,” 2-3.
director of the Diocesan Office of Black Catholics or its equivalent, all of whom would become the liaison between the diocese and the national IBCS. The response to the proposal would determine if the Institute could be considered in any other form than the present summer structure.56

In a July 1985 letter, Braxton indicated that Francis had decided not to send the "Request for Financial Support" to any potential donors and that his drafting of proposals was unknown or unclear to both the IBCS faculty and the search committee who had not been part of any previous meetings. It became clear to Braxton that it may not have been appropriate for him to have drafted any models and that Francis preferred that the Director's position and duties remain comparable to those of the late Nearon. Braxton withdrew his name from consideration for the Directorship,57 and Posey sent a letter acknowledging the inconvenience caused to Braxton, apologized for any lack of clarity, and expressed an appreciation for his proposals. Posey admitted that his idea could be used in the development of a fundraising drive, but reiterated that the agreement between the NBCCC and Xavier required that the Director maintain a teaching position in the university.58 Such was the end of any formal consideration of developing the IBCS into the official national educational institute for Black Catholic ministry formation. Although not stated in the correspondence, it can be surmised that Braxton’s

56 Rev. Dr. Edward Braxton to Dr. Norman Francis and Rev. Thaddeus Posey, 1985, IBCS 1985-1989, XULA Archives and Special Collections.

57 Braxton to Members of Search Committee, July 8, 1985, IBCS 1985-1989, XULA Archives and Special Collections.

58 Posey to Braxton, July 22, 1985, IBCS 1985-1989, XULA Archives and Special Collections.
detailed proposal was ignored and this created some tension between him and Xavier. It could also be concluded that a national institute may have relieved Francis of a portion of control over the Institute that was not worth the loss of potential fundraising income. Episcopal support, has remained a chronic concern for the Institute and it would seem that an opportunity was missed at this juncture.

The dilemma concerning the role of the Director and a National Institute were not the only issues facing the Institute during its early years. In December 1984, Sister Eva Marie Lumas wrote Posey to finalize her cancellation of the summer catechetical program since she perceived a need to “process what we propose to do and do some extensive advertising.” Sister Eva Marie was quite upset about cancelling, but assured Posey that the decision was based on the need to perfect the program, although she admitted, nonetheless, that it was an unsteady time in terms of the Institute's future. Yet, the 1985 IBCS faculty of 19 was quite distinguished and included Sister Shawn Copeland, O.P., Diana Hayes, and Nathan Jones. Eighty students participated in the summer program, and by December of 1985, 87 were registered for the summer of 1986. The IMANI (Swahili for faith) catechist program was set for inauguration that session as well. Additionally, four extension programs were established in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Lafayette, Louisiana; Birmingham, Alabama; and Chicago, Illinois. Posey, who was once again

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the Director, expressed the need to tighten up both procedures and record
keeping.\textsuperscript{60}

The 1986 Seventh Summer Session Report maintained that the session was
arguably the most successful one experienced thus far as attested by staff, faculty,
students, and the administration of Xavier. The Institute was solvent for the second
year and the IBCS was in the process of an audit to determine to what extent they
were profitable given the deficit of the first five years. (The Institute received $2,500
a year from NBCCC and Xavier contributed the rest.) It was emphasized, however,
that the outstanding enthusiasm engendered by all concerned was the true marker
of success that year. It was also acknowledged that Institute growth was enhanced
by the first session of the IMANI Master Catechist catechetical program thanks to
Sisters Eva Marie and Addie.

Two public seminars, which were required for institute students, became
part of the summer experience that year. Sister Jamie Phelps presented “Pluralistic
Theology of Church” and Rev. Leonard Scott offered “Canonical Foundations of What
We Have Seen and Heard.” One hundred twenty-four students were enrolled: 99 for
the degree program and 25 for IMANI.\textsuperscript{61} A letter from a student identified as “Father
Vince,” addressed to the rector of the major seminary of his congregation, touted the
“wonderful experience he had at summer school,” and noted that “more than being

\textsuperscript{60}Posey to IBCS Faculty, December 3, 1985, IBCS 1985-1989, XULA Archives and Special Collections.

\textsuperscript{61}Posey to Director to NBCCC and Xavier Graduate Council, July 31, 1986, IBCS 1985-1989, XULA
Archives and Special Collections.
academically qualified, the teaching staff at the Institute were teaching from a footing in pastoral ministry. Theory and practice not only met, they interacted.\footnote{“Fr. Vince” (Saint Leo Congregation, Milwaukee, WI) to “Dan,” August 16, 1986, IBCS 1985-1989, XULA Archives and Special Collections.}

In February 1988, Posey discussed some administrative concerns raised by Sr. Rosemarie Kleinhaus, S.B.S., Vice President for Academic Affairs at Xavier. The issues involved the IBCS Extension Programs, which she believed were not set upon a firm foundation. Posey argued that the operations in Chicago and Birmingham had been strong and successful, and he took offense that she considered the Extensions to be a continual disaster considering the rapid growth and appeal of those programs. He agreed that there were some major management issues pertaining to scheduling, registration, and permission to audit, which were being addressed by his office.\footnote{Posey to Kleinhaus, February 24, 1988, IBCS 1985-1989, XULA Archives and Special Collections.} Eventually, all of these programs were abandoned partially because of the commitment to the holistic experience offered on campus in New Orleans.

In April, Posey announced with enthusiasm that IMANI would offer three levels (I, II, and III) and the Master program would be offering ten courses in the summer of 1988. Once again, extension courses were held in Birmingham, Lafayette, Philadelphia and Chicago, and two public lecturers were planned. Due to multiple requests, a course entitled Moral Questions in the Black Community was added to the curriculum. Posey thanked the faculty and staff for traveling around the country as their presentations increased interest in the program and he boasted, “Our family
is growing all the time.”\textsuperscript{64} Also, the IBCS was in preparation for its first review by the Southern Association of Colleges (SACS) and Brother Cyprian Rowe was writing the self-evaluation. This evaluation required an updating of all faculty records, including course descriptions and syllabi.\textsuperscript{65}

In October 1988, Posey informed Francis that, after much discussion and a favorable response from all, he had asked Rev. Joseph A. Brown, S.J., to become Assistant Director of the IBCS. He also requested that a part-time, administrative assistant be hired as an on-site facilitator for the SACS preparation, summer 1989 preparations, and managing the routine IBCS/University information flow. Because numbers were growing, more dorm rooms were requested as well as additional housing for faculty and students who came with their families.\textsuperscript{66}

On July 13, 1989, Posey met with the Board of Directors (to be called the Advisory Committee) in order to once again clarify the administrative structure of the Institute and its relationship with Xavier and NBCCC. The inclusion of the NBCSC (National Black Catholic Sisters Conference) within the Advisory Committee was a new item for approval. Additionally, a CTU (Catholic Theological Union) pilot program in Kenya, which was available for faculty, collaboration between African centers, and the need for another Black Catholic Theological Symposium, were considered.\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{64} Posey to IBCS faculty, IBCS 1985-1989, XULA Archives and Special Collections.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{66} Posey to Francis, October 25, 1988, IBCS 1985-1989, XULA Archives and Special Collections.

\textsuperscript{67} Xavier/IBCS Board of Director Meeting, July 13, 1989, IBCS 1985-1989, XULA Archives and Special Collections.

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At the follow-up meeting, it was decided that the new Advisory Committee would provide a perspective representing Black Catholic communities at large. This committee would make recommendations for the maintenance and development of the IBCS programs from an Afro-centric perspective. The Advisory Committee, which would be composed of representatives from key Black Catholic constituencies, would convey the IBCS concerns to various constituencies in order to maintain a flow of information between themselves and the IBCS. As the occasion warranted, the Advisory Committee would make recommendations to the Policy Committee in order to strengthen the Institute's focus on being Black and Catholic.68 The original mission of the Institute continued to be augmented.

To this end, the Advisory Committee would be composed of representatives from NBBBC, NBSC, Xavier University, NABCA (National Association of Black Catholic Administrators), and the Knights and Ladies of Peter Claver. Ex officio members would include one Black Bishop, the Director of the Black Secretariat of the USCCB, the Director and Assistant Director of IBCS, and Directors of each IBCS program.69

Also in 1989, in preparation for the SACS review, the administrative structure of the IBCS was revisited. A result of this preparation was the creation of a new job description for the IBCS Director. The 1983 description stressed

68 Presentation to Board of Directors of Proposed Composition of IBCS, July 13, 1989, IBCS 1985-1989, XULA Archives and Special Collections.

69 Ibid.
prerequisites for the position and internal relationships with Xavier. At this time, the emphasis was upon job performance details, which included coordinating all Institute programs, conducting all Institute business throughout the year, and assuring that all University policies are enforced.\textsuperscript{70} The Academic Dean of Xavier University was given responsibility for the academic curriculum of the Institute, the development of new courses, recruiting new faculty to be proposed for hiring, coordinating the supervision of the advisors of degree students, coordinating all comprehensive examinations, written and oral, coordinating the practicum evaluations, and updating the Director on all matters of academic life.\textsuperscript{71}

The IBCS Assistant Directors’ job descriptions changed as previously faculty recruitment and course offerings were under their aegis. This account defined the responsibilities to include assisting in the coordination of the program requirements of all sessions of the Institute programs; coordinating senior student presentations for the student bodies; and assisting in the coordination of admitting new students.\textsuperscript{72}

The policy for the practicum, the research paper, and the written comprehensives, which were all required for graduation, were defined. In line with IBCS goals, the practicum would consist of a project, a plan, an activity, or an area of study that had a practical, demonstrable result in the Black community. Along with a research paper, students were required to take comprehensives in any three of the

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 1-2.
six core courses. The core courses were Black Approach to Theology (research and method), History of Black Catholicism, Black Approach to Scripture, Black Religion and the Arts, Catechetics, and Black Psychology. Other courses were required depending upon areas of concentrations: systematics, history, religious experience, or moral life.73

On July 14, 1989, the Policy Committee met to discuss concerns regarding the Institute and the current session. Among the primary concerns were: the spirit of the IBCS, the attitude of the students, students unclear about faculty expectations, and the relative proportion of whites to Blacks. As much as the students enjoyed the communal atmosphere, difficulties with communication, registration, and housing remained irritating and contributed to a lack of morale. Additionally, more white students were in attendance as they were more often than not placed in ministry roles to the Black Catholic community. Their presence, though positively motivated, created some obvious tensions during discussions of racism. It was thought by some Advisory Board members that perhaps the oral exams were an appropriate place for students to examine their attitudes on the subject of racism.74 These mindsets certainly needed to be discussed in a timelier manner than the Advisory board recommended.

The summer of 1990 was the year of the Institute’s Tenth Anniversary. It was, unfortunately, a difficult time in light of the death of Sister Thea Bowman,

73 Ibid.

74 Policy Committee Meeting, July 14, 1989, IBCS 1985-1989, XULA Archives and Special Collections.
which had occurred that March. On a more positive note, it was also in March that SACS reviewed Xavier University, and the operation of the Institute had been positively rated. During that year, 12 classes were offered to 109 students in the degree program and 57 in IMANI. Seven Degree Candidates and 11 IMANI students graduated in 1990. A poignant moment during the graduation ceremony was the degree granted to Ms. Carita Loving of Detroit who had also died in March. Her parents received her degree amidst a standing ovation.⁷⁵

This was also the first year for an IBCS student booklet, which contained all procedures and requirements needed for those seeking degrees or certifications. Posey moved permanently to the IBCS House on Xavier’s Campus and so, for the first time, there was an on-site director. Posey also promised to continue negotiations for affiliation with several seminaries and theological programs. Rev. Giles Conwill of Morehouse College and Sister M. Shawn Copeland officially joined the faculty.⁷⁶

In September 1990, Francis spoke to the Advisory Board and reiterated the need to clarify the Institute’s association with Xavier University. He asserted that the relationship had changed since the IBCS began and it was time to redefine responsibilities, roles, and the best use of resources. There was a “healthy” discussion concerning whether or not the original constitution of the IBCS Policy Committee (Institutional Board) could be changed. Relationships with Xavier’s Board of Directors and the Institute, the authority of the Advisory Board, and


⁷⁶ Ibid., 2.
accountability of the Institute to NBCCC were discussed. Debate concerning the role and authority of the Advisory Board would continue through the year. The tensions that surfaced at this time presaged a trend whereas Xavier would periodically reaffirm its host status in relation to the IBCS. Communication issues and the determination of appropriate structures remained a continuous subject for deliberation.77

Francis and the IBCS Advisory Board also discussed the relationship of the IMANI program to the degree program, as well as several other issues associated with that program within the Certificate and Enrichment (C & E) sector of the Institute. Sister Eva Marie Lumas resigned as co-director of the program; however, she desired to continue teaching and become part of a board established to work with the administration of the program. She voiced concerns regarding the internal relationship of the program with the Institute as well as other administrative and financial issues, and proposed an evaluation of the curriculum and a need for a C & E Advisory Board. In addition, she expressed the need for courses to serve the entire range of those persons involved in catechetical ministry so as to assist diocesan directors through parish catechists.78 Sister Eva Marie’s action personified some of the administrative tensions at hand within the Institute.

In November, 1990, Sister Addie Walker and Sybil H. Morial, Associate Dean of the now defunct Drexel Center of Extended Learning, wrote the Xavier Academic

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77 Advisory Board Meeting, September 22, 1990, IBCS 1990-1994, XULA Archives and Special Collections.

78 Ibid.
Deans and Posey regarding similar concerns, including the need for a process to replace the Associate Director, the necessity of clearly communicating the purpose of the program as well as its requirements to the students, and the importance of providing more basic Catholic doctrine in the IMANI program.⁷⁹

By the summer of 1991, however, according to Sister Addie, much had been resolved. She reported that the IMANI program had met for the sixth summer with a total of 39 students on four levels (level 4 new that year) and that their administrative operation was now highly efficient. There was one program director, a faculty week prior to the beginning of the session, a program Advisory Committee in place, and better coordination with the IBCS degree program activities within IMANI program activities. Permanent faculty members included Nathan Jones, Lisa Lewis McClain, and Leon Henderson. The addition of both new staff and courses, along with increased administrative coordination, contributed to making 1991 the “best summer yet for IMANI.”⁸⁰


On May 13, 1991, Francis asked Rev. Joseph A. Brown, S.J., to serve as Director of the IBCS. Father Brown entered the Society of Jesus in 1962, was trained

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⁷⁹ To Sr. Rosemarie Kleinhaus, Dr. Norman Wolford, Rev. Thaddeus Posey from Sybil H. Morial, Associate Dean, Drexel Center and Sr. Addie Walker, Coordinator of the IMANI Program, November 12, 1990, IBCS 1990-1994, XULA Archives and Special Collections.

at the Jesuit College, St. Bonifacius, Minnesota from 1962-1966, and took his first vows in 1964. He then studied theology at Marquette University and St. Louis University before being ordained to the priesthood in 1972 and professing his solemn vows as a Jesuit in 1981. Brown earned a Master's degree entitled “Writing Seminars” from John Hopkins in 1969 and a Master’s degree in Afro American Studies from Yale in 1983, where he earned his Ph.D. in American Studies in 1984. Most of his professional life was involved in teaching with particular emphasis in African American and American literature and aesthetics, drama, film, poetry, African American religious history, and Black Theology. Brown joined the faculty of the IBCS in 1986 and had served as Assistant Director since 1987. His promotion to the directorate would allow Posey the opportunity to devote his full energy to the demands of his doctoral studies. Although much of Brown’s future vision for the Institute corresponded to the expectations of those associated with the IBCS, he intended some important differences. Almost immediately, some small but significant changes were introduced such as the first weeklong faculty workshop, which would be a time when members could discuss long-range issues, concerns, and curriculum changes. Additionally, a Proseminar was to be required of all entering students, to be taken in tandem with Black Approaches to Theology. Brown had been advocating the provision of formal instruction of the methodologies required for successful study in all fields of the degree program for several years.

81 “Joseph A. Brown, Faculty and Staff Index,” www.siu.edu.

82 Brown had been advocating the provision of formal instruction of the methodologies required for successful study in all fields of the degree program for several years.
inadequacies of a segregated education. Brown’s intelligence and creative nature would contribute significantly to the Institute, yet there remained economic and bureaucratic obstacles to overcome.

The summer of 1991 class consisted of the smallest number of first time degree candidates in several years with only eight students. Administrators suspected that the low numbers were the result of economic difficulties, change of registration deadlines and lack of broad publicity. Brown, as well as all concerned, knew that without another plan, the Institute could not survive. In a July 24, 1991 memo to NBCCC representative, Rev. Al J. McKnight, Brown, among other things, stated:

Too often the conversation between the role of NBCCC and the IBCS is economic and that remains true, however, I do not believe that the IBCS can long survive — it certainly cannot prosper— unless every significant individual and organization comprising the national Black Catholic Church is part of our system of support. And, further, the entire Catholic hierarchy had a responsibility to assure that the IBCS was a success and, ultimately, the life of the Church depends upon it.” Brown continued, “my concern is that we maintain enough Independence to keep our vision strong so that our programs are not modified out of significance as they are subsumed under the bureaucracy of the University . . . the IBCS must be an agent for change both for the Church and Xavier University.

Brown was clearly concerned that the IBCS maintain academic independence and worried about University domination. In September 1991, Brown wrote

Norman Wolford, Dean of the Graduate School, concerning his own job description,

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84 Ibid.
85 Ibid., 2.
adding, "The IBCS, is not, and seems likely never to be a sub-division of the Graduate School. Only the graduate degree courses are technically of concern to the Graduate School. The non-degree certificate programs adhere to the regulations and vision of the Drexel Center and the Division of Continuing Education; but these courses, too, have some measure of independence from the other classes offered by the Drexel Center." Brown envisioned the Institute as an independent, coherent program sponsored and supported by, but not integral to, Xavier University. Although this is one model for an Institute associated with a University, it was not the one envisioned by Francis, the Graduate School, and, in most cases, the Policy Committee.

Brown proposed establishing a centralized order to the administration of the Institute (including collaborating with potential benefactors and supporters to reestablish strong support for the Institute programs); developing better publicity and information packages (including national speaking and recruitment engagements); exercising a leadership role within the Church community thereby strengthening the ties of the Institute to other organizations; and expanding the pool of potential faculty to ensure the continued health of the Institute. The result would be, in his determination, a true university program, which would be an Institute and not a department of Xavier. Brown saw the vibrancy of the Institute as being dependent upon a working relationship between the Director and whoever was providing direct oversight of the IBCS, which was the Dean of the Graduate

School and the Executive Board of NBCCC. He believed the model of management was an undecided issue.\textsuperscript{87} This was yet another point of contention.

Brown argued that his job description and line of oversight had not been clarified. He suggested designing a structure by which the various components of the IBCS were clearly and definitely situated in relation to Xavier policies. He then met with Xavier Vice President for Finance and Administration, Calvin Tegre, in order to devise a way that the financial needs of the IBCS and all its component programs could be centralized into conformity with regular Xavier procedures. Additionally, Brown requested a clear organizational chart, program assistance such as computer/word processing equipment, staff support, and a periodic full-scale review and assessment of the program. He also asked for an academic appointment, without a department, as a University Professor in order that he could establish interdisciplinary programs.\textsuperscript{88}

In September 1991, Brown wrote John Ricard, Louisiana-born Auxiliary Bishop of Baltimore, to thank him for participating in the IBCS Annual Seminar and asked him to rely on all members of the Institute as a major resource for the National Black Catholic Congress (NBCC) and other episcopal initiatives.\textsuperscript{89} The following year, the seventh NBCC was to be held in New Orleans at the exact time that the Institute would be in session. What was first considered to be a challenge

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\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 1-3.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 3-5.
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became an opportunity as many IBCS students and faculty were called upon to exercise roles of leadership during the planning of and meeting of the Congress. Brown became the Director of Liturgy, and Cyprian Davis, Sister Jamie Phelps, Diana Hayes and Sister M. Shawn Copeland addressed the Congress. Additionally, programs for Black families designed by the IBCS students were featured in NBCC materials.\textsuperscript{90} Brown clearly demonstrated a desire to connect and cooperate with national sources in order to attract both a viable student body and a solid economic base of support.

In March 1992, Brown wrote to the Policy Committee regarding his concerns for the IBCS. He wished to evaluate all the IBCS programs for their effectiveness and, perhaps, suggest a need for new offerings. He also wanted to discuss faculty and staff recruitment and development, as well as a five-year plan for the stability of the Institute.\textsuperscript{91} The annual summary report for the summer 1992 session indicated that the IMANI Catechist program enrollments were down while the Th.M. program and the Vocation Enrichment program enrollment had stabilized. Additionally, the Afrocentric Youth Ministry Certification Program was launched under the co-direction of Sister Jane Nesmith S.B.S. and Valerie Shields (S.S.F. postulant.)\textsuperscript{92} It was also announced that, during the upcoming year, common core courses would be


\textsuperscript{91} To IBCS Policy Committee, Invited Participants from Joseph A. Brown, S.J., March 10, 1992, 1-2, IBCS 1990-1994, XULA Archives and Special Collections.

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., 2.
offered to all students enrolled in the certificate programs (IMANI, Youth Ministry, and Leadership in the Faith Community). These courses would be offered in the areas of doctrine, worship, scripture, history and Christology. New faculty for the 1992 session included Clarence Rufus Joseph Rivers, Dwight Webster, Sister M. Shawn Copeland, O.P., and Veronica Morgan-Lee.93

Despite his argument for independence, Brown contributed an addendum to the 1992 IBCS report, which included his belief that the IBCS was in the process of settling into its relationship with Xavier. With the support of the Policy Committee and concerned administrators at Xavier, he was able to begin a course whereby the growth and development of the IBCS could more effectively be incorporated into the organizational structure of the university. He described the process as challenging, but believed that both the IBCS and Xavier would change and be strengthened by their meeting and dialogue. Details regarding student recruitment, curriculum development, faculty appointments, and formal fund-raising exercises were now being defined. Brown continued to advocate an independent economic foundation for the Institute since scholarship monies were below the real needs of students, faculty salaries were far below the norm, and the Institute operated in serious deficit from year to year.94 In terms of student evaluations, it was clear from Process Night that students enjoyed the diverse worship experiences, courses, faculty support, and community experiences.95

93 Ibid., 3.


Despite Brown’s keen desire to strengthen both the academic and economic foundation of the IBCS, his overall vision for the Institute combined with other unfolding circumstances led to his eventual removal from leadership. During the Hofinger Archdiocese Catechetical Conference held in New Orleans from January 8-9, 1993, it was reported that Brown generated some controversy. According to a *National Catholic Reporter* article, Brown questioned whether one could even be “authentically Black and truly Catholic,” and was quoted as saying that he knew too much history to be swayed by the romantic notion of “the diversity of cultures living harmoniously in some grand circle of faith.” “Today,” Brown continued, “Catholic institutions do not teach Catholicism as much as white American culture, which does not value inclusiveness or universality. Diversity of cultures sounds grand, but it is only a meaningless term that saves people from shame and conversion.”

In his letter to Bishop Francis B. Schulte, Archbishop of New Orleans and ultimate sponsor of the Hofinger Conference, Brown reported that the remarks were true, but lifted from the first part of a 90-minute speech. By condensing the first part of his address into a brief “snapshot,” the *National Catholic Reporter* had done more than misrepresent the tone of his address; it had falsified his remarks in substance and thrust. In a letter to his Provincial, Brown wrote that audience


97 Ibid.

98 Ibid.
reactions to the speech were split among three categories: those who walked out, those who evaluated him as several sorts of “nigger,” and those who stayed to provide the standing ovation and who brought their stories of conversion to him as signs of hope. Brown asked Schulte to please listen to the tape of the speech in its entirely and correspond with NCR on behalf of the Hofinger Conference, the IBCS, and the organizations they supported and represented. Brown found the misrepresentation to be deliberate because his address was singled out. He recognized that his perspective on cultural issues in the Church might have been provocative, yet he was devoted to the belief that God’s kingdom would prevail. “He is not the newest angry Black man,” he remarked, “but hopeful.”

Brown’s public perspective on the hypocrisy of Catholic institutional promotion of white culture may have been accurate, yet it contributed to his increasingly precarious position at Xavier. His presentation effectively challenged the white sector of the audience and his provocative comments were probably construed as negative publicity for the University. This begs the question as to when and where the truth should be spoken. Regardless, already on the offensive regarding the Xavier/IBCS administrative and economic relationship, Brown was now on the defensive regarding his appearance at the Hofinger Conference.

Along with Brown’s troubles, the 1993 Summer Annual Report indicated a shift in student enrollment and not always in positive directions. Some of the shifting was due to the restructuring of the curriculum, i.e., the four required core

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courses for C & E students, which had diverted some students from the IMANI program. The Youth Ministry program experienced a 100% increase over the year before although the program remained very small. That summer there were only three students who earned Th.M. degrees, and eight students earned IMANI certificates.\textsuperscript{100}

Some highlights of the year were the inauguration of a program addressing leadership in the parish. Rev. Donald Sterling drew up the initial plans and the “Leadership in the Faith Community” C & E program was conducted for the first time in the summer of 1993 under the direction of Leon Henderson. Additionally, a Practicum Committee was instituted to coordinate and review all proposals for the Practicum Project, which was a requirement for all IBCS programs. It was important to be certain that practicum projects continued to contribute to the ongoing development of Black Catholic theology in substantive practical ways.\textsuperscript{101} Another structural development in 1993 was the creation of the role of Director of Worship whose position would be to coordinate all aspects of community prayer and worship. The idea was proposed by noted liturgist and faculty member, Clarence Rivers; Rawn Harbor, liturgist and music minister, was recruited to be the new Director.\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{100} 1993 IBCS Annual Report, December 1, 1993, 1-4, IBCS 1990-1994, XULA Archives and Special Collections.

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 2.

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 3.
The first IBCS Conference took place in the spring of 1993 through the support of an NBCCC grant from the American Board of Catholic Missions and NBSC. “Catholic Education in the Black Community” was held from April 29th – May 1st of that year. The IBCS Policy Committee worked for two years to coordinate this event for the purpose of discovering ways in which Institute programs might be effectively developed to provide assistance for those engaged in the vital mission of education in the Black Community. In view of the IBCS’s limited resources, it was decided that the convening of other Black Catholic leaders and superiors of educational and religious institutions was the best course to follow.103

From April 28-May 1, 1994, “The Project for Black Vocations” was held at the IBCS sponsored by NBCCC, NBSC, NABCS, NBCC, The Knights of Peter Claver and the Ladies Auxiliary, the NCCB Secretariat for African American Catholics, and the Black Catholic Bishops of the United States. It was intended as a gathering of scholars, professionals, and concerned members of the Catholic faith community who would reflect on the theology of religious life, the status of religious life in African American communities, the renewal of the tradition of vocation, strategies for developing men for the clerical state among African American communities, and a sense of vocation to service that would be authentically Black and truly Catholic.104

Administratively, Brown reported in the summer of 1993 that the budget of the IBCS had been brought into technical harmony with the financial practices of


Xavier. There was also a stronger centralization of administrative duties and responsibilities across all divisions. In a pilot endeavor, Sister Addie Walker took on the role of Associate Director of the Institute overseeing the coordination of the various certificate programs. An Executive Committee was established to review the administration of the Institute on a regular basis. Additionally, Brown had been reaching out to the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago and Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans in hopes of developing an ongoing cooperative effort.105

In May 1993, Brown wrote a self-evaluation. At that time, Brown was also Coordinator of Graduate Studies (IBCS), Chair of the African American Studies Minor Committee, and Chair of the African American History and Culture Core Course Committee at Xavier College of Arts and Science. He was also teaching five courses at Xavier as well as conducting research, offering lectures, preparing publications, and engaging with the community.106

Brown complained about the lack of a clear commitment from Xavier regarding budget clarity, office equipment purchases, and adequate clerical support for the IBCS. He expressed an urgent need for funds for scholarships, faculty wage supplements, and adequate publicity. Also, the lack of clarity as to his administrative reporting, oversight, and accountability remained issues. Brown believed he should be reporting directly to the Vice President for Academic Affairs regularly, but instead he was reporting to President Francis. Because of the non-departmental

105 To Bill at Catholic Theological Union from Joseph A. Brown, 1993, IBCS 1990-1994, XULA Archives and Special Collections.

nature of the IBCS and his cross-departmental responsibilities, he asked for clarity on his status as far as rank and tenure were concerned. He wanted that issue decided by the fall of 1993 and, additionally, he desired more creative engagement between himself and Xavier for both effective fundraising and personnel development strategies.107

In August of 1994, Brown’s contract was not renewed by Xavier University, thereby resulting in his termination as the Director of the IBCS. It was apparent that Brown desired the best for the IBCS and he had generated some important innovations. It was also clear that Brown and Francis did not hold identical visions concerning the Institute. Brown envisioned a more independent Institute with national financial backing; Francis preferred to maintain a more integral position for the Institute within the University. Xavier had provided the site, the financial backing, and the academic accreditation for the Institute and, therefore, he understood the IBCS as an important part of the University. The relationship between Xavier and the IBCS would continue to be a source of debate between future administrations.

Next steps? 1985-1993 was a period of administrative and structural development for the IBCS. Yet, concomitant with the somewhat sterile mechanics of developing policy in order to maintain order, structure, and the stability necessary to promote growth, the IBCS continued to fortify its Th.M. programs through a variety of new offerings while it continued to attract an illustrious faculty. The C & E

107 Ibid., 6-7.
program was augmented particularly in the areas of catechetics and youth ministry. The Institute, however, did not profit from being in the middle of a power struggle between the University and the IBCS administration. Energy would have been more gainfully expended in a relentless pursuit of national episcopal support in terms of both recruitment and funding. For the gifts of Black Catholicism to be acknowledged, developed, and shared with the American Catholic Church, the bishops need to participate. Support of Black Catholicism was not and is not a priority for the hierarchy; however, the presence of racism within the Church cannot be ignored if ecclesial racial reconciliation is to be accomplished. Regardless of episcopal support, the IBCS has continued to form ministers for Black Catholic communities from the time of Brown's dismissal until the present day. The following chapter addresses the post-Brown era and how the Institute persisted as a center for Black Catholicism despite challenges.
Chapter 3
Renewal and New Initiatives

In the years following the directorship of Father Brown, the IBCS continued to develop, although the process was often difficult. While the Institute provided both the academic and ministerial skills necessary for those serving the Black Catholic community, certain challenges remained constant. This chapter investigates some of those perennial concerns, namely: the often-unclear relationship between Xavier University and the IBCS, recruitment and funding, and certain student/faculty struggles. It also recognizes the gift of the IBCS to Black Catholic ministry in the U.S. in terms of student/faculty development in both the Degree and C & E programs. As the IBCS progressed, it managed to navigate the sometimes-turbulent waters of its institutional relationship with Xavier, and remained a consistent source of education for those serving the Black Catholic community, even when unable to broaden its student base. The ability of the IBCS to progress during this period provided the foundation for the Institute’s current position as a potential center of racial reconciliation within the American Church.

Challenge: The Xavier-IBCS Relationship

After the dismissal of Father Brown in 1994, the IBCS did not employ a director until 1997. The vacating of the directorship, and therefore, direct institutional leadership, created a vacuum effecting enrollment at the IBCS while, concomitantly, allowing Xavier to increase control over the Institute. This situation
created contention between both parties, although Xavier and the IBCS continually articulated a respect for each other’s purpose and existence. An advantageous working arrangement required a negotiation that considered the vantage point of both administrations, and this cooperation remained difficult to achieve. Xavier was concerned with maintaining a stellar reputation for the IBCS as it considered the Institute part of, and therefore, a reflection on the University. From Xavier’s point of view, preserving an exceptional status for the IBCS required more oversight, which would result in a centralization of administration by the University. Meanwhile, while appreciating Xavier’s structural and ideological support, the IBCS desired the independence and flexibility necessary to innovate and develop programs.

In preparation for the Policy Committee meeting on September 1994 and one month after Brown’s contract was terminated, Sister Jamie T. Phelps, Associate Director of the Degree Program, reported that several steps had been taken toward clarifying the relationship between the Institute and the University, but the implementation of these actions remained inconsistent. In her view, there continued to be a need to elucidate the association between the IBCS and Xavier as well as to define structures, job descriptions, internal accountability, and responsibilities of Institute faculty, administration, and committees. She desired an accurate recording, ratification, and implementation of the decisions made by the

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1 The Policy committee at that time consisted of the Director of the IBCS; the Associate Director of the Degree Program and a degree faculty member; the Associate Director of the C & E program and a C & E faculty member; the Coordinator of the Vocation Enrichment Program; a faculty member at-large; and one student representative. The Dean of the Drexel Center assumed adjunct membership for Continuing Education and the Dean of the Graduate School.
Policy Committee. "The constant re-inventing of Institute structures, relationships and procedures," she stated, "is not the most productive use of the Policy Committee and the faculty."² Sister Jamie recommended that a new agreement be created in which Xavier continued to welcome the IBCS as a respected academy and special institute affiliated with the University similar to such institutes at other universities.³ There remained ample room for an increased understanding between Xavier and the IBCS that had yet to be attained during their nearly 17-year relationship.

The following day, the Policy Committee met and Francis reaffirmed that the existence of the IBCS was extremely important to Xavier and the commitment of the University had not wavered. He insisted that the issue of “external” and “internal” governance, however, had to be addressed. It seemed clear that, in the wake of Brown’s controversial directorship, Francis wanted to further envelop the Institute into the internal structure of the University by channeling everything through Dr. Nathaniel Felder, Dean of the Graduate School. According to his plan, the Policy Committee would be viewed as part of the internal structure of the Institute and there would be ongoing communication between the Policy Committee and Felder. Francis commented that the external governance of the Institute had to be clarified and, accordingly, he would seek advice on this issue especially in regard to the relationship of Xavier and the IBCS with the NBCCC. He noted that the

² Dr. Jamie T. Phelps, O.P., Relationship between the Institute for Black Catholic Studies (IBCS) and Xavier University, September 1994, IBCS 1990-1994, XULA Archives and Special Collections.

³ Ibid.
administration of the Institute was in a transitional phase and a committee would be appointed to search for a director; he also required that a three-year plan be developed as soon as possible. It seemed that Francis remained unsettled after the events surrounding Brown’s termination as evidenced then and again during another Policy Committee meeting later that month.4

At that later meeting, Felder emphasized that the Institute was now an affiliate of the Graduate School, and the certificate programs would also be incorporated into the non-degree programs or special student category already in place at the University. This new language seemed excessive, as did the need to control the C & E programs. Felder was concerned with the criteria for admission to the IBCS, as he desired to maintain consistency between Xavier and the IBCS graduate programs. He also requested definitive job descriptions for all positions including that of director and insisted on a plan of action for acquiring a director along with a timeline.5

Felder further stated that the administrative responsibilities for the certificate and graduate programs would be centralized in the Graduate School and the Policy committee endorsed this action. It seemed odd that the Policy Committee agreed to such an arrangement unless it was understood that Xavier would intervene only as a final arbiter of contested administrative issues. The next director would have a faculty appointment with administrative duties, and could achieve

4 IBCS Policy Committee Meeting, September 10/11, 1994, 1,
5 Ibid., 1.
tenure. It was Felder’s opinion that the structure of the Institute was similar to other academies or institutes because it was associated with an academic unit.\(^6\)

In addition, Felder insisted that organizational charts be redone and that the process of membership selection for the Advisory Committee\(^7\) be identified. He suggested that the President make appointments to the Policy Committee, that the Dean appoint members to the operational units, and that the Institute Director be a member rather than the chairperson of the Policy Committee.

In terms of the Xavier/IBCS relationship with the NBCCC, Felder mentioned that the bulk of the financial responsibility for the Institute had been borne by Xavier and not the NBCCC or any other group. Although true, it seemed he was making a case for further University involvement. He clarified that the Director of the Institute did not confer degrees or hire faculty, but did recommend both faculty appointments and candidates for the Master's degree to the Dean.\(^8\) It was clear that Xavier meant to tighten control over the Institute at least during this critical juncture.

Almost immediately, the IBCS Policy Committee, in collaboration with the Dean of Xavier’s Graduate School, (at first Felder and later, Dr. Alvin Richard) began a review of the Institute’s operating policies and procedures. The IBCS self-study

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\(^6\) Ibid., 3-4.

\(^7\) At this time, the Advisory Committee met once or twice a year and consisted of representatives of Black Catholic leadership and representatives of major organizations closely allied with the IBCS efforts. The Committee assisted the Director and the Policy Committee in representing the Institute to the larger Black Catholic community, as well as giving advice on fundraising, recruitment, and development of new programs.

\(^8\) IBCS Policy Committee Meeting, September 10/11, 1994, 4-5.
was done internally with an external review and included an investigation of
history, mission, curricula, and governance components. Components of the self-
study were to be circulated by April 1995 and were to be ready for external review
by August 1995.\footnote{Ibid., 1994, 1-2.}

In October of 1994, the Advisory Committee submitted a five-year plan of
recommendations/directional statements to the Policy Committee, which included a
variety of laudable goals, including some that remain unfulfilled to this day such as:
1) Increased collaboration between the IBCS and other Black Catholic educational
programs; 2) Increased levels of external funding; and 3) Increased promotion of
the IBCS.

Several months later, Advisory Board members were asked how they
thought the IBCS would be positioned in five years’ time. Interestingly enough, most
of their predictions remain part of the IBCS vision of providing a scholarly research
and resource center for the Black Catholic community. At that meeting, Sister Jamie
predicted that the IBCS would become a fully developed national program with an
academically qualified and critically Afrocentric Catholic faculty committed to the
theological and pastoral formation of any student preparing to minister in the
African American Catholic Community.\footnote{Advisory Committee Role and Purpose, October 28, 1994, IBCS 1990-1994, XULA Archives and Special Collections.} This, indeed, did happen, if not on a grand
scale.
What remained to be decided at that time was whether the IBCS was to be an integrated department within the Graduate School or an independent Institute accountable to Xavier University through the Graduate School. Based upon Felder’s commentary at the late September Policy Committee meeting, it appeared that Francis and the Graduate committee seemed to prefer the former. Yet, it was decided that an informed decision could not be made until the self-study and organizational committees completed their fact gathering.\textsuperscript{11} Cyprian Davis’ memo to Sister Jamie in November 1994 indicated that the relationship between an institute and its parent organization could vary depending upon the agreement. Often the host university confers the degrees, but not always.

Davis concluded, however, that, due to a lack of endowment and property, the IBCS would have to remain dependent upon Xavier. Nonetheless, he contended that the IBCS should be able to maintain its own internal affairs in collaboration with the graduate school. Curriculum and recruitment of teaching personnel should be the responsibility of the Institute, as it pertained to the development of a community of scholars, committed to fostering research as theologians, Scripture scholars, historians, and liturgists. This meant being prepared to foster publications including, perhaps, a journal. Davis argued that the IBCS needed to sponsor lectureships and symposia with the understanding that those contributions could be published. In other words, according to Davis, an institute must have a research

\textsuperscript{11} Policy Committee meeting, September 1994, IBCS 1990-1994, XULA Archives and Special Collections.
component as well as a pedagogical purpose, and he never lost sight of the scholarly purpose of the IBCS as proposed in the original *Plan for Action*.

The June 1995 memorandum included an organizational chart for the IBCS that situated the Dean of the Graduate School at the pinnacle with the Policy Committee reporting to the Dean, the Advisory Committee reporting to the Policy Committee, and the Director of IBCS reporting directly to the Dean. This clarified Brown's earlier confusion regarding the line of command for the Institute Director. Focal points of the October 1995 Policy Committee meeting were the Xavier administration’s concerns regarding the Institute’s serious budget deficit and the need to channel Institute publications through Xavier’s Public Affairs Office. In a further measure to tighten control, Francis reiterated that the Policy Committee should consider the Institute as part of Xavier's mission and responsibility and that the Institute should follow the practices and procedures of the University.

Two years later, in October 1997, Sister Jamie, who was Associate Director of the Degree Courses at that time, offered some recommendations to the Policy Committee in terms of reviewing the role and function of the committee. She stated that in order to survive the transition period, the Policy Committee functioned as a corporate director with the administrative team functioning as its plenipotentiary representative. In that capacity, all the administrative decisions of the associate directors and details of the program (housing, faculty recruitment, guest speakers) were reviewed and approved by the Policy Committee. This micro-management

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caused some confusion and, in Sister Jamie’s view, should not continue. In addition, items had been brought to her attention, which belonged to the decision-making scope of the Policy Committee. Instead of having separate meetings of the Policy Committee and the Advisory board, Sister Jamie recommended that the Advisory Committee become a subcommittee of the Policy Committee, i.e., an Advisory Committee with responsibility for fund raising and public relations. At that time, the Advisory Committee was a permanent standing committee, which meant some of its membership did not serve on the Policy Committee. She also recommended that Rev. Bill Norvel, S.S.J. and either Bishop Terry Steib, S.V.D. or Bishop Moses Anderson, S.S.E. be appointed to the Policy Committee as external members. The bishops were to represent two of the major religious groups serving the Black Community. Academic requirements were to be reviewed so that the Policy Committee clearly understood that those teaching on the Degree faculty must hold a terminal degree; in most cases this meant they needed a doctoral degree in their field.

Instead, in December 1997, the role of the Policy Committee and key staff members were redefined in a different direction. The Policy Committee remained a representative body of the Institute’s administration, faculty, and students, and acted as its governing body. It was responsible for both the direction (establishment of the values, goals and objectives, and integrity and mission of the Institute) and

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13 Sr. Jamie T. Phelps to Dr. Eva Regina Martin and Dr. Alvin Richard, October 15, 1997, 1, IBCS 1995-1999, XULA Archives and Special Collections.

14 Ibid.
the management of student affairs. Its powers included, but were not limited to, the evaluation of policies, budget, faculty, and curriculum of the Institute. The Policy Committee was comprised of internal and external members and the internal members included five “ex officio” members and five elected members. Those who were “ex officio” included the Dean of Graduate Studies, the Director of the Institute, Associate Directors of the Degree and Certification and Enrichment Programs, and the Associate Director of Student Affairs. The five elected members consisted of two faculty representatives from both the Degree Program and the C & E programs, and one student. The external membership was comprised of persons knowledgeable in the fields of theological and Africentric education or fields related to theology that were nominated by members of the Policy and Advisory Committees.15

The Policy Committee was also responsible for governance of the Institute, including the collegial oversight, development, and evaluation of polices, budget, curriculum, organizational structures, and any other matters customarily addressed by a policy-making body of an institution. Through its relationship with the Advisory Committee, which remained a standing committee, the Policy Committee guaranteed that the IBCS support a mission that was "truly Black and truly Catholic.16

The Director of the Institute was responsible for the oversight and development of the Institute in collaboration with the Associate Directors and the

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16 Ibid.
Dean of Graduate Studies. As chief executive officer, she or he had the ultimate responsibility for the on-going development of the Institute faculty and programs, as well as for the recurrent activities related to fundraising, development, and public relations. The Director was appointed by the President of the University in consultation with the Vice President of Academic Affairs and the Dean of Graduate Studies. The Associate Director for the Th.M. Degree Program was the principal administrator of the program. The Director, in consultation with the Dean of Graduate Studies, appointed the Associate Director.\textsuperscript{17}

It was obvious that the association of the Institute with the University had solidified and that the criterion for Institution administration was strengthened. Yet, although the Policy Committee was theoretically representative in structure, in reality the new directives gave the Policy Committee control of the Institute. Although the IBCS administrators managed the daily operations of the Institute and the Director was to have an influential role in institutional development, ultimate governance of the Institute would remain in the hands of the Policy Committee. For some, this arrangement guaranteed academic excellence and an Africentric focus. For others, this organization perpetuated micromanagement. This issue continued to resurface throughout the history of the Xavier/IBCS relationship.

Once again, in July of 2002, discussion of affiliation resumed in the context of exploring the role of the Policy Committee. During the Degree Policy Committee meeting, the possibility of a joint session of both the Degree and C & E Policy Committees was raised. Sister Jamie requested that the committee reopen

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 6-10.
discussion of a public relations/marketing organizational chart and registration process in order that members could report on the assigned work completed in these areas. Discussion ensued concerning the role of the Policy Committee in such a collaborative effort. Sister Jamie reminded members that the IBCS had changed its status from “at” Xavier University to “of,” Xavier University and that Cyprian Davis had been commissioned to research the relationships of other institutes with their home universities across the country. He discovered the existence of various relationship models including several in which the institute was both self-governing and accountable to the university. Allowing for the variety of institute governance models, Sister Jamie argued that the Policy Committee should revisit the concept of the IBCS Degree Policy Committee as being solely advisory.\textsuperscript{18}

After some discussion, Dr. Richard explained the role of the Policy Committee within the University as being advisory, and any IBCS academic matter that impacted the university was referred to the Graduate Council who forwarded it to the Vice President for Academic Affairs for final resolution. There were few areas that did not impact the University or require formal approval, usually from the Dean, even when quietly consulted.\textsuperscript{19} Once again, it was clear that the final word of decision making on academic matters was within the jurisdiction of the Xavier Graduate Council, even in those instances when the Policy Committee was said to govern the Institute. It was certain then that the Degree Policy Committee would

\textsuperscript{18} Degree Policy Committee, July 15, 2002, 2, IBCS 2000-2004, XULA Archives and Special Collections.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 2-3.
remain purely advisory. Additionally, the IBCS administrators were directed to work with Xavier staff when developing market strategies.\footnote{Ibid., 3-4.}

Over a decade later, in September 2013, the Advisory Council gathered and met with several academic Division chairs, the Provost/Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, the faculty of the Theology department, staff members from the office of Institutional Advancement, the Director of the Office of Black Catholic Ministries and the Director of Religious Education for the Archdiocese of New Orleans. Their agenda centered on exploring way in which the IBCS could be better integrated into the larger university, especially the Theology department. Once again, the relationship between Xavier and the IBCS was in a process of refinement.

Currently, the title of the Institute is \textit{Xavier University The Institute for Black Catholic Studies}. There exists a separate Policy Committee for both the Degree Program, and the C & E Program, and there are two separate Advisory Councils for both programs as well. The Director of the IBCS is the chief executive officer responsible for the oversight and development of the Institute in collaboration with the Associate Directors of the IBCS, the XULA Vice President of Academic Affairs, and the XULA Dean of the College of Arts and Science via the Graduate Council. The Director has ultimate responsibility for development of the Institute faculty and programs, as well as for activities related to fundraising, development, and public relations. The Associate Directors are the principle administrators of their programs.
It appears that the administrative structure eventually solidified into an Institute that is part of Xavier University. Although it maintains its own internal administrative structure, the University is represented on all the IBCS committees and makes all final determinations regarding academic affairs. The Institute, meanwhile, operates independently in terms of program management and the Director must be concerned with fundraising and public relations. In short, the IBCS, particularly the Director, are required to participate vigorously in the perpetuation of its existence by providing for student scholarships. The current Director, Father Maurice Nutt, conducts retreats and missions in order to publicize the Institute. Meanwhile, Xavier continues to provide the operational expenses for the Institute, which remains feasible as long as the University stands on solid ground. Fortunately, the IBCS remains an important component within the total mission of Xavier University although fundraising, it would seem, remains a challenging distraction to a director with a permanent staff of two: himself and an administrative assistant.

**Challenge of Recruitment and Fundraising**

As mentioned previously, one of the concerns raised during the October 1995 Policy Committee meeting was the Institute’s serious budget deficits. Xavier had always assumed the operating costs for the IBCS and was, therefore, legitimately concerned with its future, particularly student enrollment. The Advisory Committee recommended a balanced budget be prepared for 1996 since the 1995 deficit was $85,851. Fortunately, the projected 1996 deficit was $71,587, which pleased
Francis since the deficit was moving in the right direction.\textsuperscript{21} Unfortunately, budgetary shortfalls for the Institute would average $108,500 for the period covering 1997-2000.\textsuperscript{22} The shortfall would obviously continue absent additional student enrollments.

During Process Night in July 1997, the most significant challenge that surfaced for discussion was the general promotion of the IBCS in order to increase enrollment. Students suggested that all possible means be utilized to advertise the Institute, including publishing student work, developing recruitment incentives, securing a website, and training students and faculty as diocesan recruiters. It was also proposed that the IBCS be represented at a booth at the NBCC; be mentioned in the \textit{Chronicle of Higher Education}; advertise in church bulletins, all Catholic organizations, and all national and local Catholic publications; and, finally, employ a part-time marketing director. Other general recommendations included; anti-racism training, allowing for course audits and/or participation in community life without long-term commitment, and more experiential learning in New Orleans.\textsuperscript{23}

During an October 1997 Degree Program Faculty Meeting, student recruitment was defined as the most urgent task due to decreased enrollment in that program. New suggestions offered to improve enrollment included public

\textsuperscript{21} Degree Policy Committee, July 15, 2002, 9, Response to July 14, 1995 Recommendations to IBCS Advisory Committee from IBCS Policy Committee, October 14, 1995, IBCS 1995-1999, XULA Archives and Special Collections.

\textsuperscript{22} A Proposal to the Committee of Home Missions, IBCS Budget Report, October 16, 2000, IBCS 2000-2004, XULA Archives and Special Collections.

\textsuperscript{23} IBCS Process Night, July 1997, 5-7.
advertising in the *National Catholic Reporter* and other Black and Catholic publications, as well as sending fliers to all Catholic theological schools and parishes. Sister Jamie ended the discussion concerning the recruitment of students with a stern admonishment (her emphasis): *A WORD TO THE WISE IS SUFFICIENT; THE WORD IS: NO STUDENTS, NO MONEY, NO FACULTY OR STAFF; NO FACULTY OR STAFF, NO DEGREE PROGRAMS!*  

In 1998, student participants in a survey felt they possessed the greatest potential for recruitment of other students because they could share their IBCS experience. They suggested starting an IBCS alumni organization to help spread the word and generate monies. Participants also proposed increased development activities to raise funds for scholarships, consideration of an abbreviated IBCS experience that could attract newcomers and/or alumni who might want a refresher course, sharing of promotional materials that would be provided to each IBCS member before departure, initiation of an Internet website for the IBCS, and the expansion of student opportunities to take courses that would be accepted at the IBCS through home institutions. Unfortunately, student word-of-mouth and unofficial networking aside, most of these suggestions were not implemented. Low student enrollment continued to be a serious issue, prompting Sister Jamie to once again warn: “THIS IS A VERY SERIOUS MATTER AND FAILURE TO ADDRESS

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24 Ibid., 4.
STUDENT RECRUITMENT FOR THE DEGREE PROGRAM COULD END IN THE DEGREE PROGRAMS ULTIMATE COLLAPSE FINANCIALLY.”

Some new suggestions for recruitment included: a bulk mailing to predominantly Black parishes, Black History month fliers, publishing a journal or quarterly with IBCS information for parish distribution, creating an IBCS Newsletter, holding an “IBCS Sunday” in parishes, taking a special collection in parishes, and publicizing alumni awards. It is not clear how many of these ideas were attempted other than newspaper advertisements; however, the enrollment issue continued to be a primary concern for the Institute.

For example, The Long-Range Planning Document, which included the years 1999-2004, focused on the IBCS goal of increasing student enrollment. Since there had been a downturn in the number of students who had expressed interest in pursuing the Master of Theology degree, the Director and faculty embarked upon an active recruitment effort to increase enrollment. To support this work, the Graduate School extended the non-degree category of enrollment to qualified persons who did not intend to pursue a degree. To accommodate non-degree students, the Graduate School offered these individuals the opportunity to take a maximum of nine hours of graduate credits.


Another challenge was that many students had difficulty paying tuition. Sister Eva Regina’s 2001 report to the Catholic Home Mission Association stated that some of those seeking degrees or certificates at the IBCS had returned to serve poor rural parishes. The majority of students, however, were working in poor, Black, inner-city parishes in dioceses all over the country. At this time, Sister Eva Regina reported that the Institute was at a crossroad; it could grow or it could stay where it was; it could be strengthened or simply maintained. The administration and faculty wished to move ahead and gradually increase the population to 200 students per year. In order to achieve this, the IBCS needed a new stable source of support.

Xavier had made a substantial investment in the Institute, yet deficits were running at more than $100,000 a year, which excluded an annual overhead of $60,000. At the same time, the University was reluctant to increase tuition as students were already making ample sacrifices of time and money. Sister Eva Regina admitted that a grant of $50,000, which the Committee on Home Missions awarded Xavier for 2000-2001, would surely help stabilize the Institute’s budget.28

During fiscal year 2008-2009, the Director of the Institute assisted by the Executive in Residence, who is part of Xavier’s Institutional Advancement staff, solicited funds from a variety of Catholic foundations, religious congregations, and institutions. The donors from 2005-2009 numbered about 75 organizations and individuals. Hurricane Katrina and the worsening of the national economic situation precipitated a definitive decline in contributions. All monies collected were used for

28Sr. Eva Regina Martin, A Proposal to the Committee on the Home Mission, 2001,4-5.
student scholarships, while Xavier University provided for the operational expenses to which IBCS contributes student tuition, fees, and donations.

The current Director, Father Maurice Nutt, has expressed his seriousness about increasing enrollment and fundraising. He would like to see 100 students a session and he noted that 75 students were enrolled in the program during the summer of 2015, indicating that IBCS is “alive and well” and will continue to move forward in service to the American Catholic Church. Fortunately, Xavier has provided a stable foundation for the IBCS; however, Institute participation in providing income through student enrollment and fundraising has been a perennial challenge. The need for a solid relationship with the USCCB in order that seminarians and all who minister or intend to minister to Black Catholics are strongly encouraged or, perhaps, mandated to attend the IBCS, is necessary for both the survival of the Institute and the evangelization of and ministry to Black Catholics. The IBCS leadership has continuously met with Church leaders, worked on national committees, and solicited donations.29 The impetus for a strong affiliation, however, must begin with the bishops who, as a group, do not seem concerned with Black Catholics.

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29 For example, according to the CHM Grantee Report 2000-2001, Director Sister Eva Regina Martin met with the President of the American Bishops Conference, the Archbishop of New Orleans, and the major Superiors of men and women who work with African American communities. Martin was a consultant to the Committee on African American Catholics, NCCB, as well as an advisor to the Department of Education, USCC.
Tensions and Development, 1994-1997

From 1994-1997, Ms. Valerie Shields handled the daily site operations of the IBCS while a core “Immediate Administration Concerns” Team supervised administrative and programmatic matters. The members of this team were: M. Shawn Copeland, Leon Henderson, (Associate Director of Student Life), Sister Jamie Phelps (Acting Associate Director for the Degree Program) and Sister Addie L. Walker, S.S.N.D.30 Sister Addie Walker and Henderson served as acting directors for the Summer Session.31

The 16th IBCS Summer session was held in 1995 under the auspices of the Xavier University Graduate School with the “Immediate Administrative Concerns” team in charge. The Degree Program, Master Catechist Certificate, Youth Ministry, Leadership Training Program, and Vocation Enrichment programs were in place. Policy Committee meetings held earlier that year highlighted the development of a normalized structure for the Institute. An organizational structure committee was formed that included Father Cyprian Davis, Nathaniel Elder, Rev. Paul Marshall, Rev. Msgr. Leonard Scott and Sister Jamie Phelps (chairperson).

Sister Jamie stated that the Administrative team had not functioned well that summer and students detected attitudinal differences among the team members. Yet, she reported a generally positive summer experience due to the faculty, the

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Student Life Committee, and the Liturgy Committee. Administration without a Director was a difficult situation that needed to be addressed as soon as possible.

The fall 1995 Policy Committee recommendations revealed tensions between degree and non-degree faculty members. Sister Jamie and Copeland, who had joined the IBCS faculty in 1990, made a series of recommendations to improve faculty relations including a mandatory faculty session and the teaching of both team building and conflict resolution skills. The committee agreed that it was difficult to form a community between students in degree and non-degree programs when both faculty and student backgrounds and expectations were different. They saw resolution of the issue within the range of possibility, however, in such a community-minded, Christ-centric environment as the IBCS.

In July 2, 1996, a degree faculty meeting found the instructors optimistic after what was described as “a stimulating and productive session.” The faculty recognized the need to improve student advising and to work in consultation with the Policy Committee to revise the IBCS course list and practicum. In addition, without lowering standards, the faculty was exploring techniques to help the students cope and achieve success. Payne and Henderson suggested the initiation of

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33 Ibid., 8.

34 Ibid.

35 IBCS Degree Faculty Meeting, July 2, 1996, IBCS 1995-1999, XULA Archives and Special Collections.

36 Ibid.
a support group to help students deal with new emotions that often could not be resolved in class. They believed that the IBCS workload could produce a great deal of stress and that some students felt handicapped by their lack of theological experience. Sister Jamie acknowledged the need for a trained counselor on the staff and, if the Th.M. courses proved too stressful, she suggested that perhaps students needed extracurricular courses during the year to strengthen their theological foundation. Days later, during the Degree Student Advisement night, students commended the excellent faculty and the Proseminar, which was designed to help them manage the workload successfully.

At the same student meeting, Sister Jamie emphasized the importance of the integration of an Africentric and Catholic perspective in any course taken for IBCS credit. She reminded students that the Institute “is not a tourist stop where students come to enjoy a brief African American immersion experience, but a serious, holistic academic program designed to prepare participants for their ministry within the African American community.” Sister Jamie suggested, additionally, that the Institute could provide more globalization of African American and African dimensions of Black culture and theology and adopt a more critical approach to the notion of “Blackness” and race.

37 Ibid.
39 Ibid., 2-3.
40 Ibid., 2.
Other academic developments occurred during this Interim Period. For the first time, the faculty was required to write syllabi in behavioral terms. Oral exams and written text were to demonstrate what was mastered. In short, from this juncture, all data was based on qualitative as well as quantitative evaluations of student outcomes upon completion of the programs at the Institute. Students would be tracked and mentored during the session in order to assess student progress. They would be provided the experience necessary to prepare them for ministry, teaching, and community involvement upon graduation or certification.41 This was also the time when both Sister Jamie and Sister Addie Walker, Associate Director of the C & E program, recognized that catechetical program development should begin by considering the needs of dioceses and parishes where the IBCS graduates would potentially serve. It was additionally proposed that the Institute offer two tracks for catechetics: 1) Catechetics and 2) Master Catechetics, in order to serve everyone involved in Religious Education.42 Instead, one program evolved, which required previous experience in general catechetics in order to participate.

The three-year interim period between Father Brown and Sister Eva Regina’s directorship may have witnessed a decrease in enrollment and the attendant deficit, yet it was a productive period in the sense of academic and administrative development. The IBCS administration continued to work deliberately on University/Institute relationships, recruitment, and academic standards as well as

41 IBCS Director and Associate Directors Meeting, April 10-11, 1996, 1, IBCS 1995-1999, XULA Archives and Special Collections.

42 Ibid., 4.
plan for the future. Further, attempts were made to address student stress levels, which is a reality that remains an issue today. The IBCS moved forward despite inter and intra administrative tensions and funding needs. The holistic, Africentric curriculum, embraced by a supportive faculty and staff, advanced the Institute effectively toward the twenty-first century. Subsequent directors continued to move the IBCS forward while they addressed the challenges of University/Institute relations and recruitment.

Sister Eva Regina Martin, S.S.F., 1997-2003

In 1996, after a national search, Francis named Sister Eva Regina Martin, S.S.F., as Director of the IBCS effective August 1997. At the time, she was a doctoral candidate at Temple University, having earned an M.A. in theology from the IBCS through Xavier and a M.A. in education from Incarnate Word College in San Antonio, Texas. Sister Eva Regina had been a workshop presenter, teacher, principal, catechist, and sacramental program coordinator, and had written articles for various magazines such as Plenty Good Room, NCEA Publications and Sojourner.43

In the same year as her appointment, Sister Eva Regina confirmed the following assignments: Sister Jamie Phelps, Associate Director for the Degree Program, Sister Addie L. Walker, Associate Director for Certificate and Enrichment Programs, and Leon Henderson, Associate Director of Student Life.44 During her

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43 Sister Eva Regina Martin to Dr. Eunice Smith, January 24, 1996, IBCS 1995-1999, XULA Archives and Special Collections.

44 “History,” 4.
term as director, Sister Eva Regina introduced several new initiatives, which included the publishing of the Institute journal (*Sacred Rock*), a high school “Youth Empowerment program, and a Preaching Institute. These innovations, unfortunately, would not persist, yet faculty and student development continued to be impressive.

*Degree Program Developments* Three months after Sister Eva Regina’s appointment, an addendum to the Degree Program report suggested the necessity of further faculty development and the employment of student critical study aids, such as “How to Read a Theological Text” and “How to Write a Graduate Research Paper,” which were developed by Copeland and Sister Jamie. One of the recurrent challenges at the Institute was the lack of research, writing, and critical thinking skills among the students. Faculty had been encouraged to direct students to take research and writing courses at colleges in their home area in order to improve their academic skills, but it became obvious to the faculty that a serious effort was needed to assist students in this area, in addition to the Pro-seminar.

After the addendum, faculty syllabi were reviewed, individual interviews with each degree faculty member were held, and a standard report form for practicum observers was designed. Sister Jamie suggested appointing a curriculum committee which was formed and, eventually dropped, but which has

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47 Ibid., 1.
been currently reinstated. The inaugural committee consisted of M. Shawn Copeland (Systematics); Rev. Brian Massingale (Ethics); Rev. Cyprian Davis (History); John Ford (Psychology); Sister Eva Regina Martin (aesthetics); Veronica Morgan Lee (education); and Randall Lee (Scripture). The following summer, the curriculum committee met and Massingale, the Chair of the Committee, reported that because there had not been a review of the curriculum since 1983, an examination of all courses would commence. A new degree committee began to work on curriculum revisions so that the new curriculum could be implemented in 2000.49

That same year, the five-year plan for the IBCS was released which emphasized sharpening the African American perspective on all areas of academic, catechetical, liturgical, and formational experiences, as well as designing the same for all who work in the African American Community.50 Since many Catholic leaders did little to promote an understanding of Black Catholic history, it seemed necessary that Xavier commit to this task. As Father Cyprian Davis stated, “African American Catholics are still a buried treasure, still unmined gold.”51 It was agreed that

48 Ibid.

49 Summary of Curriculum Committee Meeting, April 14-15, 2000, IBCS 2000-2004, XULA Archives and Special Collections. In actuality, only a few of the proposals were implemented such as the retitling of the course “Black Approaches to Theology” to “Black Approaches to Catholic Theology,” in order to convey the integration of both perspectives.49


51 Ibid.
inculturation and ideas of inclusion provided the most promising plan for retaining African Americans in the Catholic Church.  

The following year was marked by faculty development as well as dedication to the promotion of the IBCS through conference participation and the publishing of books and journal articles. Although the IBCS faculty held full time positions elsewhere, their contributions to the field translated into positive publicity for the Institute. For example, three IBCS faculty members were invited to present papers for the Black Catholic Theological Symposium during its annual meeting that March at the University of Notre Dame. M. Shawn Copeland, Associate Convener of the Symposium, presented “Anthropology and Metaphysics in ‘Fides et Ratio.’” Sister Eva Marie Lumas wrote on “Evangelization and Liberation in North America,” and Sister Jamie Phelps focused on “Communio-Implications for the Roman Catholic Church in the African American Community.” Additionally, Rev. Bryan Massingale was featured in the NCR concerning the 1999 joint conference of Black Sisters, Priests, Brothers, Seminarians and Deacons in Charlotte.

Journals featuring faculty articles included the NCEA Journal, New Catholic World, Liturgy 80, Origins 22 and the New Theology Review. Some of the books published by faculty were Black and Catholic: The Challenge and Gift of Black Folk: Contributions of African American Experience and Thought to Catholic Theology.

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52 Xavier’s IBCS, Five Year Planning Report and Director’s letter to students, 1997, 1-2, IBCS 1995-1999, XULA Archives and Special Collections.

Taking Down Our Harps: Black Catholics in the United States and The History of Black Catholics in the United States.  

Prior to 1999, classes normally took the form of lectures. With the addition of new and varied methodologies, faculty were now able to solicit answers from students through a research format approach to learning, connections to the internet, the promotion of critical thinking, and participation in dialogue, in order to encourage future research. Power points and visuals helped students become more focused and engaged, while visiting research centers and museums was another form of learning incorporated that year. New approaches and modern technologies were combined in order to enhance the IBCS learning experience.

Goals for 2000-2001 focused on the faith and justice dimensions of Black Catholic life due to the canonization of Xavier founder, Mother Katharine Drexel, in 2000. The Institute was determined to intertwine the issues of faith and social justice throughout the curriculum, to initiate faith and justice themes within academic advisements, and to increase library holdings that focused on themes of faith and justice. Martin suggested that Father Ted Arroyo and Ted Quartz from Loyola University, New Orleans, Twomey Center for Peace and Justice be utilized and that a special resource person be hired to give three lectures on social justice to students. From 2000-2001, the process began on a small scale as students visited food distribution centers and wrote papers on the subject, and collected

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55 Ibid.
$600 for a parish in Houston decimated by the flood of spring 2001.\textsuperscript{56}

In July 2000, at a degree faculty meeting, Bryan Massingale raised the issue of students’ inability to integrate the IBCS prayer experiences with their studies. Copeland rejoined that immersion into community life was an important formational feature of the IBCS generally lacking in other summer programs. Having taught in several such programs, she affirmed that the IBCS was intentionally committed to a holistic approach, which included theological, pastoral, spiritual, and social requirements and expectations.\textsuperscript{57} The tension between the merits of a holistic program and the value of study time continue to be negotiated to this day.

Massingale additionally raised a concern that had been voiced in the past: the students were intelligent and capable of pastoral practice but not ready for theological reflection without extensive guidance and mentoring. He argued that an over-extended faculty could not give the time needed to mentor these students despite their goodwill and generous intentions. Additionally, students who were in charge of parishes with great financial and other needs would find it increasingly difficult to leave for the summer. His concern was that many competent people would not enter or complete the degree program because, even with their best efforts, they could not meet the expectations.\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{57} Degree Faculty Meeting, minutes, July 3, 2000, 2, IBCS 2000-2004, XULA Archives and Special Collections.

\textsuperscript{58} Curriculum Committee, July 11, 2000, 1, IBCS 2000-2004, XULA Archives and Special Collections.
During a June 26, 2003 degree faculty meeting, Copeland stressed that the goal of the IBCS program was to prepare people for pastoral ministry in the African American community. She argued that the degree component was more accurately a program in Pastoral Studies that took the theological work of inculturation seriously by offering an interdisciplinary academic approach. Faculty and students were expected to participate in holistic experiences that invited members to respond individually and collectively to the grace of ministry.\textsuperscript{59} At this meeting, Copeland outlined the process for degree students, which consisted then and continues to this day, of coursework including a Proseminar; qualifying exams that determine readiness to continue the program; a major research paper; a practicum in the Black Community or an historical research paper; and oral comprehensives. In particular, she mentioned that the practicum provided an intervention into the Black Community that could be institutionalized. Some early examples of practicum projects were: “When Faced with Gang Problems: Build a Safe Community,” and “Highlighting and Celebrating Black Cultural Diversity in the Parish of Christ the King in South Miami.”\textsuperscript{60}

Copeland described the degree students as average second career summer school students with a range of backgrounds and involvements in ministry. Their scholastic and theological preparation was quite uneven since they were a heterogeneous composite of engineers, high school instructors, religious,

\textsuperscript{59} Degree Faculty Meeting, June 26, 2003, 1, IBCS 2000-2004, XULA Archives and Special Collections.

\textsuperscript{60} Institute for Black Catholic Studies Degree Practicums- Summer 1995, IBCS 1995-1999, XULA Archives and Special Collections.
seminarians, businesspersons, parents, and the rare Ph.D.61 This description continues to be accurate and persists in challenging the IBCS instructors in their efforts to meet the needs of their students.

Copeland affirmed the concept of the “village,” representing a term introduced by Leon Henderson in which elders, youth, and students are actively involved in the life of the community according to their respective roles, responsibilities, and gifts. In addition to advocating the requirement of a thorough preparation in Black Catholic history for the students, Cyprian Davis argued that the amalgamation of differences enriched the collaboration of ministries.62 Sister Jamie reiterated the need to match the needs of parishes and dioceses with the formation training at the Institute in order that students were employable when they returned to their dioceses. Sister Jamie Phelps also affirmed that the IBCS could provide both the Catholic and the Black aspects of the formation as they related specifically to work and worship in the Black Catholic Community.63 The idea was certainly not to present standard Europeanized theology in Black face, but rather the IBCS encouraged people to create and write inculturated material, that is material where the message of Christ penetrates the Black socio-cultural milieu and, therefore, enriches that community.

61 Degree Faculty Meeting, June 26, 2003, 1.

62 Ibid., 2.

At the same meeting, the issue of the reception of Black theology among Catholic theologians, particularly at Xavier, was raised. Xavier affirmed the Institute’s acceptance of Black theology as it was considered a relatively young but valid approach. Many on campus needed basic updating on recent theological trends and degree faculty member Dr. Paulinus Odozor, C.S.Sp., suggested that the IBCS annually sponsor a serious lecture to which the University community would be invited. Despite this suggestion, no evidence of a symposium by a Black theologian at the IBCS was found in the archives and it seems surprising that a theology that had emerged thirty-five years earlier was considered “relatively new.” In fact, Black Theology has most certainly influenced Black Catholic theology from its onset and, therefore, has shaped the curriculum of the Institute from its inception.

At the July 2003 qualifying exam meeting, it was reported that it was the second year without degree students, which could compromise the future of the IBCS. At the July 2003 Process Night, student challenges listed included the need for advanced reading material and syllabi so that they could manage the intense workload of the Institute. Students praised the liturgical experiences, the community life, the MAAFA (Kiswahili for the “terrible occurrence” when millions of

64 Ibid.

65 Degree Student Meeting, Qualifying Examination Meeting, July 9, 2003, IBCS 2000-2004, XULA Archives and Special Collections.
Africans died during their journey to the Americas as slaves, and the Ancestor’s commemoration, but felt taxed in terms of time needed to complete assignments.

In September 2003, Sister Jamie answered a request for components of the IBCS programs to be taught in Washington, DC; Arlington, Virginia; Wilmington, Delaware; and the Harrisburg, Pennsylvania areas. She responded that she would have to explore the possibility with the appropriate parties as well as consider how standards could be maintained at satellites. Sister Jamie was concerned about student-teacher contact as well as how to ensure a holistic experience for participants. Ultimately, this satellite arrangement did not occur and currently the idea of other learning locations remains on the radar with the same reservations. As difficult as securing the necessary time and finances necessary to attend the IBCS, replacing the total immersion experience has remained an obstacle to satellite or distance learning.

Certificate and Enrichment Development  As mentioned in Chapter Two, the Certificate and Enrichment programs were inaugurated in 1986 with the offering of the IMANI catechist formation program. Youth Ministry was added by 1992, and the Leadership in the Faith Community program was launched in 1993. By 2002,

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68 IMANI was changed to Afrocentric Catechetical Program so as not to be confused with the Imani Temple of former Roman Catholic priest, George Stallings.
the Certificate and Enrichment programs included the Africentric Catechist Leadership Program, Leadership in the Faith Community, Spiritual Enrichment programs, and Youth Empowerment programs. The Africentric Catechist leadership program was intended for those Christian educators/catechists who possessed at least three years of experience in the area of religious education. It was meant to affirm one of the insights of Vatican II, that a faith community flourishes when bound to the Church universal while retaining its own specific identity (Gaudium et Spes #58). The Spiritual Enrichment programs that year were organized around the African American Elders Retreat/Seminar for those 60 years of age and older, as well as the African American Adult Laity Spiritual Enrichment Week/Weekend for those who were 21 years of age and older. Participants shared in Morning Praise, the communal life of the Institute, and a daily process of prayer, all the while sharing the wisdom, faith, grace, and vocation of Eldership from an African American perspective.

Sister Eva Regina Resigns  Sister Eva Regina’s tenure as director was a period characterized by much faculty and student development. Faculty performance was assessed and new teaching methods were employed; the IBCS benefitted from faculty contributions in terms of books, articles, and international presentations.

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70 IBCS Program Description, Summer 2002, IBCS 2000-2004, XULA Archives and Collections.
Students continued to laud faculty efforts and the IBCS experience, although they complained of the need for advance materials due to the workload at the Institute. The faculty voiced concern regarding student progress, although some of these issues were mitigated once the administration increased faculty advisement on all levels of the IBCS academic progression. Sister Eva Regina was succeeded by Sister Jamie Phelps, whose tenure will be marked by the continuation and development of many of the projects she initiated while she was Associate Director of the Degree Program. She insisted on an unwavering Africentric focus, high academic standards, and program relevance that would render the students employable upon graduation.

**Sister Jamie T. Phelps, O.P. 2003-2011**

In 2003, after Sister Eva Regina was elected to a congregational leadership position, the University began a second national search for a Director. During the interim, M. Shawn Copeland, Associate Director of the Degree Program, Sister Eva Marie Lumas, Associate Director of the Certificate and Enrichment Programs, and George Franklin, Acting Associate Director for Community Life, collaborated as a team under the leadership of Kathleen Dorsey-Bellow, who served as Coordinator of the Institute. In 2003, Dr. Francis appointed Sister Jamie T. Phelps as the Institute’s Director effective in August of that year. This natural transition of an exceptional Associate Director, who was steeped in the philosophy of the IBCS and extremely concerned for its future, was a fortuitous moment in the history of the Institute. In October 2003, Sister Jamie appointed Copeland as the Associate Director of the
Degree Program and confirmed the continuance of Franklin and Sister Eva Marie in their respective positions.71

In 2004, Sister Jamie appointed Cecilia Moore and Kathleen Dorsey-Bellow as Associate Director for the Degree Program and Associate Director for the C & E programs, respectively. Moore, who has been a mainstay at the Institute since 1998, remained an Associate Director until 2011. Along with Cyprian Davis, she brought an historical perspective to the Institute.72 Dorsey-Bellows was a graduate of the Institute and a faculty member.

In June 2004, a letter from Phelps to lay, ordained, and religious men and women ministering in the Black Community informed them that the IBCS offered: graduate degree program, the Africentric Catechesis Program, the Youth Ministry Program, and the Ministerial Leadership in the Faith Community.73 In 2006, due to the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina, the IBCS was held at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana. On July 2, 2006, Sister Jamie wrote a letter of inspiration to the IBCS community. In sum, she commended the survival of the IBCS after Katrina, yet urged that the Institute move forward and thrive.

In this letter, Sister Jamie described the new covert racism as one that has broadened to include immigrants and other persons of color in America. She also

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71 “History,” IBCS Website, 4.


73 Jamie T. Phelps, Fund of Theological Education Meeting, IBCS program data report, February 10, 2005, IBCS 2005-2009, XULA Archives and Special Collections.
illustrated cultural and economic diversity within the African-American community and noted how these differences posed challenges for effective evangelization. Meanwhile, the larger Church was experiencing the diminution of Black Catholic parishes, schools, and Offices of Black Ministry. Sister Jamie concluded that only faith could confront the embrace of materialism, individualism, and consumerism that inundates American society.

In 2007, after extensive repairs to the Xavier campus, the IBCS returned to the campus for their summer session. In 2008, C. Vanessa White was named Assistant Director of the C& E Programs. In 2010, Cecilia Moore expressed a critical need for a new Curriculum Committee, which she assembled that fall. Moore sought at least one person to develop online courses, which is something that has yet to happen at the IBCS, but perhaps will be part of the Institute’s future.

Certificate and Enrichment Development  In 2004, The C & E program components remained Catechesis, Youth Ministry, and Ministerial Leadership in the Faith Community. These programs were augmented by four core courses that updated participants’ knowledge of Catholic doctrine, scripture, history and liturgy. A distinguishing aspect of the enrichment program was the participation of students in Black religious expression workshops in the area of drama, art, music and dance in order to assist the students in employing aesthetics as a medium of religious

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74 Phelps, Fund of Theological Education Meeting.
75 Ibid.
76 IBCS Degree Program, 2010, 3-4, IBCS 2010-2014, XULA Archives and Special Collections.
education and ministry. Finally, two spiritual enrichment programs were offered as one week seminars: one for ages 60 or older, and one for adults 21 and above. While a majority of the students were Black Catholics, as always, all were welcomed to participate in this form of immersion for cross-cultural ministry in the Black community.\footnote{Phelps, Fund of Theological Education Meeting.}

Due to fluctuating interest and enrollment, the C & E Catechist Formation, Youth Ministry, and Leadership in the Faith Community programs were formally evaluated in 2005. That same year, the C & E Policy Committee recommended to the IBCS Director that the C & E Program be restructured into three one-week modules that would respond to the ongoing need for faith and pastoral ministry formation in the Black community and address the challenges of time and money faced by many volunteers. C & E students, who were currently working toward certification in the Youth Ministry and Catechist Formation programs, were allowed to complete their course of study and achieve certification. The certification processes were otherwise suspended while the Committee continued to study the ministry needs of dioceses and the direction of the USCCB regarding the formation of lay ecclesial ministers. Recognizing its importance to the development of parish life, it was proposed that a focus on Young Adult Ministry be added to the Youth Ministry track.\footnote{“History,” \textit{IBCS Website}, 4-5.}

In 2006, the new format for the C & E program was implemented utilizing the one-week session model. C & E offered programs in Catechesis, Youth and Young
Adult Ministry, Leadership in the Faith Community, Liturgy for Pastoral Ministers, and Campus Ministry. Additionally, two spiritual enrichment programs (The Eldership Retreat Seminar and Taste of the Institute) continued to provide one-week study and spiritual reflection opportunities for adults.  

*Sister Jamie Resigns* In 2011, Sister Jamie Phelps resigned as Director of the Institute in order to continue her research and writing, yet she returns every year to teach at the IBCS. Sister Jamie was the guiding light of the IBCS degree program and she constantly insisted upon investigative evaluation of all programs so that they would continue to flourish and respond to the needs of the entire Institute community. She never wavered from her focus on Africentric Black Catholicism throughout the years, and her academic status assured that the IBCS achieved and maintained high academic standards.

**Pamela R. Franco 2011-2014**

In 2011, Loren J. Blanchard, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, appointed Dr. Pamela R. Franco as Interim Director of the IBCS. Franco, a native Trinidadian, earned a Ph.D. in art history from Emory University in Atlanta. Prior to her appointment as executive associate for Academic Affairs at Xavier, she was an Assistant Professor of Art history at Tulane University. In addition, she served as a

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80 "History," 5.
member of the Newcomb Gallery Advisory Board and the Director of a summer abroad program to Trinidad and Tobago. Franco had also been instrumental in organizing symposia and exhibitions on African and Caribbean art. Her tenure lasted for three years.  

During that three-year period, Xavier University’s administration conducted an external review of the IBCS in general and the Th.M. program in particular. They met with students, past and current, as well as faculty and administrators. The External Review Committee submitted several recommendations seeking to enhance and progress the IBCS and its operation. During the review, Franco explained that she had made a concerted effort to attend national organization meetings such as NBCC, NABCA and BCTS, which were important actions in terms of Institute publicity. In 2013, Franco appointed Kirk Gaddy as Associate Director for the Master Degree program and timone davis as Associate Director of the C & E programs. Although low enrollment was again experienced in 2013, courses were not compromised and students participated fully in co-curricular activities.  


82 “History,” IBCS Website, 5.  

83 “On the Move” IBCS Newsletter (Fall 2013), 2, IBCS 2010-2014, XULA Archives and Special Collections.  

84 Ibid.
Certificate and Enrichment Programs  C & E programs from the time of Franco’s interim directorship, include: Catechist Formation for the Black Catholic Community, Youth and Young Adult Ministry, Leadership in the Faith Community, and Spiritual Enrichment programs. The latter include the Eldership Retreat and Taste of the Institute Programs, which provide a daily process of prayer, reflection, and sharing the wisdom, faith, grace, and vocation of Eldership from an African American perspective. Participants are part of the communal life of the Institute and are invited on trips, sessions, and classes as they feel appropriate.85

C & E sessions are composed of three one-week modules along with the core courses and participation in weekly theological reflection. Continuing education credits are available for participants.86 The goals of each component are specific to the ministry needs of the participants, but the overall program could best be summarized as a holistic response to the needs of those ministering in African American Catholic communities.87

Maurice J. Nutt, C.Ss.R. D.Min. 2014-Present

In the fall of 2013, a national search for a new Director of the IBCS was initiated, and Rev. Maurice J. Nutt, C.Ss.R. D.Min., was selected in April 2014 as the

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87 Ibid.
new director, beginning his tenure on June 30, 2014. Known as “Father Maurice” to all who know him, Nutt earned a Master of Divinity from the Catholic Theological Institute in Chicago and a Doctor of Ministry in Preaching from the Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis. His Master of Theology degree was conferred at Xavier where he had been a faculty member for many years. Father Maurice continues to facilitate retreats, revivals, missions, and lectures throughout the year, which help him realize his goal of publicizing and raising funds for the IBCS. It will be Nutt’s job in the upcoming years to implement the current University Review Board study of the Institute.\footnote{88 Christine Bordelon, “Institute of Black Catholic Studies Has New Director,” \textit{Clarion Herald} (July 15, 2014), clarionherald.info/.../3524- institute-of-black-catholic-studies-has-new-director (accessed March 18, 2016).} According to Nutt, “Recruitment of new students will be major focus of mine…. My goal is to have 100 students enrolled every summer.” \footnote{89 Ibid.} Additionally, Nutt hopes to shorten the length of time it takes to earn a Master’s degree by offering a blended mix of courses: some online course and maybe even some satellite courses in cities where there are multiple students. He also aims to expand the Masters of Theology program to include Word and Worship and possibly history, social sciences and education, and urban studies and religious education.

\textbf{Issues of Race and the IBCS}

The primary purpose and goal of the IBCS is to train effective ministers for the Black Catholic community. The nature of Black Catholicism, however, is such that Black Catholics confront chronic racist practices both within and outside of the
Church. The IBCS programs, therefore, although purposely designed for the intention of supporting ministry to Black Catholics, are concomitantly devised with a keen awareness of racism. It is important, therefore, not to dismiss incidents of racism that were reported within the IBCS community.

The IBCS has generally confronted racism through its holistic curriculum, which has included coursework, inculturated worship services, rites, and celebrations particular to the African American community. Through both the awareness and reinforcement of the giftedness of Black Catholicism, a self-confidence and pride is fostered, which, in and of itself, is an effective challenge to racist practices.

In reading archival papers, very few incidents of overt racism or racial tension were reported to have existed on the IBCS campus. One documented occasion concerned a Black student who was very upset with a white priest, Father Richard Myhalyk, because he presided at morning liturgies and, particularly, because he presided at the closing prayer service of the Institute in 1999. Myhalyk interpreted the woman’s frustration and anger to be a result of his being a male cleric who prevented women from exercising greater leadership roles. In actuality, the student was upset because Myhalyk was a white presider at a Black Catholic institute. Sister Eva Regina Martin, Director of the IBCS at that time, wrote a response to Myhalyk indicating that his presence was welcomed, however, she clarified the situation by stating that when students outside of the Black culture assume leading roles, Black students often perceive that their “safe space,” a place where they can be truly Black and truly Catholic, is invaded. Sister Eva Marie’s
candid response to Myhalyk exemplified an attitude of racial reconciliation as
promoted at the Institute, yet definitively set forth the guidelines for future liturgical
participation by white students. This action seemed confusing on the surface, but
less so when considering the prevalence of white privilege in the U.S. Church.

Another experience having to do with racism was reported in a newspaper
article published on August 17, 2000. Sister Eva Regina recounted the story of a
Black priest who came to the Institute ready to leave his religious congregation
because of the pain and isolation he felt due to the treatment he received from the
members of his community, who were mostly white. According to Sister Eva Regina,
“The Institute transformed his life in such a way that his community even asked him
to give retreats. His community embraced him. He learned that he, too, had a
responsibility to contribute to his community.”90 M. Shawn Copeland, who was
interviewed for the same article, reflected on the pain of racism within the Church,
which was something she felt the Church needed to deal with through “a serious
self-critique.” One African American student told her the story of exchanging a
handshake with a white woman at the sign of peace only to see the woman “‘pull out
her Kleenex to wipe her hand afterwards.” When describing racism, Copeland
remarked, “How more ‘powerful’ could that be?”91 Sister Eva Regina and Copeland’s
statements reveal the permanence and sting of racism, which is a situation that the

90 Peter Finney Jr., "Black Catholic Studies Institute Unique Experience," Clarion Herald (August 17,
2000), IBCS 2000-2004, XULA Archives and Special Collections.

91 Ibid.
IBCS acknowledges in all that it does while promoting effective ministry for Black Catholics.

Another example of how the pain of racism continues to affect the IBCS community was expressed during a July 10, 2003 Degree Faculty Meeting. Copeland conveyed her appreciation of the MAAFA attendance although she also thought a more sober atmosphere should be established for so solemn an occasion. She cautioned that references by some non-Christian practitioners at the MAAFA program might disturb the sensibilities of more traditional Catholic participants creating controversy where none is needed. The libation ceremony, as presided over by the priestess, was discussed as a potentially troublesome element of the day. She speculated that there was low participation possibly because it involved remembrance and healing of a very painful experience in African American history that many have not yet begun to examine.92

Sister Eva Marie Lumas added that social stratification among African Americans is still very apparent in New Orleans and she, therefore, doubted that life-long residents would enthusiastically embrace such an event as MAAFA since there is an ambiguity about race and slavery that remains today. Degree faculty member Estella Conwill Majozo reminded the faculty that large numbers of African Americans do not participate in those cultural events that highlight the uglier aspects of the past, and for most there exists a huge gap between studying history and living out the implications of that history in healthy and whole ways. MAAFA

92 Degree Faculty Meeting, July 10, 2003, 1, IBCS 2000-2004, XULA Archives and Special Collections.
planners, however, strove to provide compassionate outreach\textsuperscript{93} and it was obvious that attendance at MAAFA was a significant and poignant contribution to the overall curriculum and purpose of the IBCS.

Meanwhile, the Institute has been envisioned as a place to refocus the pain produced by the horrors of slavery and recurrent racism into creative ministry. IBCS student Denise Beal maintained,

\begin{quote}
If the experience of understanding God through the Scriptures, through word and worship, is like a tree that bears fruit, Black experience has some unique minerals to offer to that tree and will make it bear more fruit. It makes me feel as though the ground I stand on as a Catholic is much more solid. If it can be solid for me as a Black woman, it can be solid for anybody.\textsuperscript{94}
\end{quote}

Beal’s statement reveals the double challenge of being both Black and female, yet asserts that the IBCS experience has affirmed the gift of her Blackness. Every course at the Institute is designed to promote awareness of the inherent beauty of Black Catholicism and its endowment for the entire Church. Every course, therefore, undermines the forces of racism by both elevating and inspiring Black Catholics to be certain of their grace-centered reality. According to Sister Eva Marie, “we set the environment but God is doing the transformation. We engage people not only in the head but in the heart.”\textsuperscript{95}

As previously stated, Sister Jamie Phelps, while Associate Director of the Degree program, had called for the Institute to include more African American and

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid.
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African dimensions of Black culture and theology and adopt a more critical approach to the notion of “Blackness” and race. In 2006, as Director of the Institute, she wrote about the new, more insidious racism that has characterized the country since the Civil Rights movement. Sister Jamie argued that this situation contributes to the vicious corollaries of poverty: poor education, unemployment, poor housing, violence, and loss of hope. She inquired as to what the difference was between those Black persons who are succeeding in life and those who are getting lost, and she called for faith in the face of fear. In her letter, Sister Jamie outlined the future role of the IBCS as it seeks to train effective ministers within the milieu of a more covert racism and white privilege. Even so, Sister Jamie was unable to predict the intense racial environment that would exist in America ten years later and how the IBCS would assume a more intentional role in racial reconciliation within the Church, and perhaps, the nation.

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96 Ibid., 2.

97 To IBCS Students, Faculty and Administrators from Sister Jamie T. Phelps, June 22, 2005, IBCS 2005-2009, XULA Archives and Special Collections.
Chapter Four
Black Catholic Scholars and the Institute for Black Catholic Studies

The Institute for Black Catholic Studies was conceived, inaugurated, and developed by many of the finest minds within the Black Catholic scholarly community. Without the intellectual foundation established by this innovative group, and the creativity and persistence demonstrated by those who followed, the IBCS could not offer the exceptional educational opportunities it has provided over the past thirty-six years. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the ways in which three Black Catholic scholars influenced the mission and the core curriculum of the Institute: historian, Cyprian Davis, theologian, M. Shawn Copeland, and ethicist, Bryan N. Massingale. It is my intention to demonstrate that their work enriches the IBCS by providing the historical, theological, and ethical foundations necessary to develop a Black Catholic consciousness. They provide the inspiration for serving the Black Catholic community effectively while promoting an awareness of Black Catholicism as a gift to the entire American Roman Catholic Church.

Concomitantly, these scholars impact the IBCS degree program by providing the requisite foundational material necessary for developing ministerial skills. Because their projects are advanced in the spirit of Christian hope, their work could help the IBCS develop into an agency of racial reconciliation and solidarity within the Church and contemporary society.

The late historian Cyprian Davis highlighted the gift of Black Catholicism, and along with ethicist Bryan J. Massingale, recognized racism as an evil that
systematically permeates the ecclesial structure of the Church. Massingale offers possible solutions for addressing the sin of white privilege and supremacy within the institutional church. M. Shawn Copeland, a theologian, highlights the cultural and spiritual contributions of Black Catholicism; her work concentrates on the theological locus and methodology needed to address racism in general. All three ultimately expose the realities of structural racism within the Church and the attendant necessity of healing and reconciliation. Their liberationist perspective underscores the enduring presence of white supremacy and privilege and the need to eliminate these destructive realities; their reliance on the efficacy of hope inspires the prospect of ultimate racial solidarity. The Catholic doctrines of the Pascal Mystery and the Mystical Body of Christ, along with a deep appreciation of the sacramental system, create a framework for their vision of full communion. These scholars furnish the academic foundation necessary to substantiate practices of genuine racial reconciliation within the Church.

**Cyprian Davis, Black Catholic Historian**

No account of Black Catholic theology would be complete without considering the influence of the late Black Catholic historian and Benedictine monk, Cyprian Davis. In 1990, Davis wrote what is considered by most members of the Black Catholic theological community to be the most comprehensive and rigorous challenge to the general disregard of Black Catholics as historical actors: *The History of Black Catholics in the United States*. Davis argued that history rejects the notion that Black Catholicism can be ignored; Black Catholics add another perspective to
the word “Catholic” and to an understanding of the American Catholic Church.\(^1\) Without this work, the current understanding of Black Catholic ministry, religious education, advocacy, literature, spirituality, and theology would have been nearly unimaginable.\(^2\) Davis’ foundational work provided the necessary contextual material for the theological and ethical projects of M. Shawn Copeland and Bryan N. Massingale, whose work will also be surveyed in this chapter.

Clarence John Davis was born on September 9, 1930, in Washington D.C., to Clarence W. Davis, who taught at Howard University, and Evelyn Jackson Davis, a teacher in the DC school system. His interest in history as a youth led to a fascination with the Catholic Church; by the age of 15, his superficial curiosity changed into serious faith and, after much debate with his father, Davis was received into the Church.\(^3\)

During high school, Davis came to know Rev. Carleton Sage, S.S.S., professor of Church History at Catholic University. Davis was grateful to Sage for both exposing him to historical scholarship and gently nudging him in the direction of St. Meinrad Abbey in Indiana.\(^4\) He eventually studied at St. Meinrad from 1949-1956

\(^1\) Davis, *The History of Black Catholics*, 259.


\(^3\) Cyprian Davis, “To Be Both Black and Catholic” (Marianist Award Lecture, University of Dayton, OH, 2006): 5-6.

\(^4\) Ibid., 10.
and was invested as a novice, taking the name “Cyprian,” in 1951. That year, he
professed simple vows and was ordained to the priesthood in 1956.5

Davis earned his licentiate and doctorate in historical studies from the
Catholic University in Louvain, Belgium, in 1963 and 1977, respectively. His focus
during his graduate studies was primarily the Middle Ages and medieval
monasticism and, in time, many in the monastic world began to recognize Davis as
an accomplished church historian. The transformative period in his life, however,
began while at Louvain, where he met monks who were involved in the preliminary
work leading to the Second Vatican Council. At this juncture, changes began to
enfold within the Church as well as the Benedictine order, which corresponded to
transformations within society.6 Dom Cyprian responded to these modifications
gradually, albeit in a profound way, which altered the course of his life and that of
Black Catholicism in America. He admitted, “The sixties changed me like it changed
many others. I had gone to Europe as a rather prim and proper young man . . . I
returned as a Black man, part of a ‘new breed’ with a whole new understanding of
Church history.”7

From this point forward, it is difficult to separate Davis’ concern for ecclesial
racism from either his civil rights activism or his scholarly work. There are a few
sections within his book, The History of Black Catholics in the United States, which

5 Raymond Studzinski, “Cyprian Davis-Monk, Historian, Teacher; Agent of Hope,” U.S. Catholic

6 Ibid.

7 Davis, “To Be Both Black and Catholic,” 12.
more specifically focus upon the origins and accomplishments of Black Catholics, although ecclesial racism cannot be totally excised from this material. In these segments, Davis illustrates the gift of Black Catholicism to the Black community as well as to the entire American Church.

_Cyprian Davis and the Gift of Black Catholicism_ From 1982-1983, Davis participated in a program on the history of the Black Church; through the Lilly Endowment and under the auspices of Bishop Moses Anderson, he was asked to write a history of Black Catholics. Although Davis has written many articles and six books, he will be especially remembered for _The History of Black Catholics in the United States_ (1990), a 350-page study of the Black Catholic experience extending from the early Spanish explorations through 1970. Even though it is not without its imperfections, with some objecting that his project was too broad to do justice to particular issues within the Black Catholic community, Davis’ stated goal of this book was to provide a framework “within which future historical research can develop.” In any case, his book remains the essential study of the American Black Catholic experience, told from the perspective of African Americans. At the IBCS, Davis’ book is a basic text for both the C & E and degree programs.

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8 Ibid., 13.


10 Studzinski, 97.
Davis organized his book around six themes, three focusing on the often-unn noticed history and accomplishments of Black Catholics within the Church, and three concentrating on ecclesial racism. His first theme contends that the roots of Black Catholicism extend back to the days of Christian antiquity in Africa. Second, Black Catholics have been present in what is now the United States from the earliest days of Spanish and French settlement, and they also constituted an important segment of the Catholic population in the Spanish borderlands and French Louisiana.

Third, a Black Catholic community, Afro-French in heritage and centered but not confined to Maryland, Louisiana, and the Gulf Coast, emerged after the antebellum era and defined itself more clearly in the decades after the Civil War. This community, nourished by a few dedicated white priests and sisters, produced lay people of faith and sanctity such as Pierre Toussaint; parishes such as St. Francis Xavier in Baltimore, and St. Augustine’s in Washington, DC; and religious communities of women such as the Oblate Sisters of Providence and the Sisters of the Holy Family. Despite overwhelming obstacles, a few Black priests were ordained; most importantly, in Davis’ judgment, Father Augustus Tolton. In the lives of all these men and women lay the foundation for evangelization, apologetics, and enculturation.

11 M. Shawn Copeland argues that this is an original apologia. Black Catholic theologians have been held accountable for how their beliefs have been formed, nurtured, and mediated, and Davis located Black Catholics factually and symbolically in Africa. (Copeland, “Building up a Household of Faith,” 59-60).
Tolton’s ministry to African Americans helped inspire the first of three distinct periods of Black Catholic activism: The Black Catholic lay congress movement (1889-1894), the Federated Colored Catholics (approximately 1917-1933), and the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus (1968-present). One of the distinguishing features of the first two phases of activism was the key role played by laymen, particularly publisher and editor Daniel Rudd, who was the guiding genius behind the Congress Movement, and Thomas W. Turner, the founder and president of Federated Colored Catholics and the leading voice of Black protest during that time. The movements founded by Rudd and Turner increased a sense of solidarity and community among Black Catholics and articulated a theology of racial justice.¹² According to historian, Margaret McGuinness, Davis’ documentation of the work of the Black Catholic laity in this area is one reason why this book is such an important contribution to American Catholic history.¹³

M. Shawn Copeland argues that Davis restored to prominence a legacy of unparalleled lay courage, commitment, and competence nearly seven decades before the strenuous affirmation of lay apostolic action by the Second Vatican Council. The lay congress movement’s concerns and discussions included political, economic, cultural, and religious matters of a national and international scope.¹⁴ Copeland additionally acclaims Davis’ historical studies as they corrected and expanded the understanding of Black Catholic tradition, first revealed in the

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¹² Ochs, 713.

¹³ Margaret McGuinness, review of The History of Black Catholics in the United States, 1407-1408.

¹⁴ Copeland, “Building up a Household of Faith,” 59-60.
nineteenth century, while supplying vision, depth, and breadth to the tradition’s horizon.

_Cyprian Davis and Ecclesial Racism_  Davis had avoided studying American history during his graduate years because of the unpleasantness of issues related to slavery and racial strife; events going on around him in the 1960s, however, compelled him to respond to what he perceived as a real need among African American Catholics.\(^1\) When he returned from his studies in Belgium in 1963, the Civil Rights movement was well underway. While visiting his parents in Washington, he participated in the “March on Washington” and heard Martin Luther King, Jr., deliver his famous “I Have a Dream” speech. With three other monks, Davis went to Selma, Alabama, in response to King’s invitation to the clergy to put their lives on the line on behalf of the Black population who were seeking the right to vote. At this time, Davis began to speak in parishes about racial justice and desegregation where he was asked questions about the Catholic Church and civil rights, as well as the place of Black Catholics in the Catholic Church. Davis’ Black consciousness had increased due to the transformative ecclesial experience he had witnessed in Europe and he welcomed the opportunity, mandated by the Second Vatican Council, to speak out against racial injustice.\(^1\) Engagement in civil rights activity and sensitivity to the hunger of Black Catholics to know their place in their


\(^{16}\) Studzinski, 96.
Church led him to an intellectual confrontation with the painful and tragic history he once sought to avoid. Davis possessed the research skills necessary to mine the almost inaccessible documents necessary to tell the story of Black Catholicism in the United States.\footnote{Massingale, “Cyprian Davis and the Black Catholic Intellectual Vocation,” 77; Davis, “To Be Both Black and Catholic,” 13; Studzinski, 96.}

In 1968, Davis was present at the first meeting of the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus (NBCCC), which created the document that claimed, “The Catholic Church in the United States is primarily a white racist institution.”\footnote{“A Statement of the Black Catholic Clergy Caucus, 1968” in “Stamped with the Image of God,” 111.} He nervously, yet resolvedly, signed the document in protest of the Church’s implication in slavery, the silence of the bishops in the face of segregation, and the support given to racist institutions by the Church.\footnote{Davis, “To Be Both Black and Catholic,” 16.} He became a founding member of the NBCCC and remained involved as its archivist almost until his death in 2015.\footnote{Studzinski, 96.} In 1969, Davis discovered an article by Thomas Spalding about the congresses of Black lay Catholics held between 1889-1894. Upon reading the essay, Davis knew he possessed the genesis of the American Black Catholic story.\footnote{Davis, “To Be Both Black and Catholic,” 13.}

Davis participated in the first Black Catholic Theological Symposium held in Baltimore in October 1979, and he was the editor/archivist of their journal, which was launched in 2007. In addition, Davis contributed to the second draft of *Brothers*
and Sisters to Us in 1979, which was the US Bishops’ Pastoral letter on racism, and he helped to write the initial draft of What We Have Seen and Heard, the 1984 pastoral letter on evangelization from the nation’s Black Catholic bishops. Davis was also a member of the inaugural faculty of the Institute of Black Catholic Studies, where he taught for many years and served as informal academic dean and mentor.22

Among the six themes Davis names as present in his landmark study, The History of Black Catholicism in the United States (1990), three specifically consider ecclesial racism. First, Davis emphasized that the American Catholic Church was morally compromised by its complicity in the institution of slavery.23 In analyzing the impact of Davis’ book, ethicist Bryan Massingale recognizes Davis’s manifest concern for the legacy of slavery for Church and society. Massingale argues that dealing with what M. Shawn Copeland describes as the “virulent residue” of slavery is a cognitive, moral, and existential imperative for Black Catholic scholars. While the “Black” identity is not equivalent or reducible to “enslaved,” slavery is the starting point for intellectual reflection on the Black experience. Massingale contends that Davis’ research demonstrates the decisive impact slavery has had upon the history and moral authority of the Church in the United States. Most importantly, he argues, slavery was not merely a tragedy of the past but it set the tone for the U.S. Catholic community’s subsequent and enduring relationships with


23 Ochs, 712.
African Americans, both Catholic and Protestant. Davis established that the
time of slavery set the parameters of racial relations that endure into the
present. 24

Second, Davis, as well as Copeland and Massingale, paid particular attention
to the opening address of the Fourth Black Catholic Congress and described it as “an
incipient Black Catholic theology of church.” 25 Copeland contends that Davis gave
contemporary Black Catholics, in particular laypeople, a way to think theologically
about ministry and leadership. In a prescient paragraph, the delegates at the Fourth
Black Congress took the imperative to denounce racism within the Church as it runs
contrary to authentic Catholic teaching: 26

We know that the Roman Church, as she is One and Apostolic, is also
Catholic and Holy. With thorough confidence in the rectitude of our
course in the enduring love of Mother Church, and the consciousness of
our priesthood, we show our devotion to the Church . . . we respectfully
call attention to those wrong practices which mark the conduct of those
clergy who have yielded to the popular prejudice. 27

With the phrase, “our priesthood,” the Congress participants intimated an
awareness of the theological notion of the priesthood of the faithful. This concept
resonates throughout the work of another Catholic systematic theologian, Sister

25 Davis, The History of Black Catholics, 189.
26 Copeland, “Building up a Household of Faith,” 60.
27 Davis, “Two Sides of a Coin: The Black Presence in the History of the Catholic Church in America,” in Many Rains Ago: A Historical and Theological Reflection on the Role of the Episcopate in the
Jamie Phelps, and Copeland as a decisive moment in the history of Black Catholic theology.\textsuperscript{28}

The third theme of Davis’ book focusing on racism was his consideration of the Black Catholic Clergy Caucus movement as “a milestone in Black Catholic history,” which for one of the first times featured clerical initiative. He argued that the increased, although insufficient, number of Black priests who met in 1968 was due to earlier efforts by white and Black clerical allies to open Catholic institutions to African Americans. In that struggle, Davis contended the priests benefitted from a discreet but an important ally in the Holy See. As a response to perditions, protest, and pleas from Black Catholics and white missionaries, the Curia persistently pressured American bishops to increase their efforts to evangelize Black Catholics and to include them more fully in the life of the Church.\textsuperscript{29}

In addition to these six themes, M. Shawn Copeland maintains that Davis’ historical work displays deep regard for the task of collective or cultural memory, noting that such a memory encompasses “the-age old, out of the way, and discarded . . . it includes the subversive and disowned.”\textsuperscript{30} Another function of cultural memory is exorcism or purification, which makes unseen suffering and oppression visible in order to make reconciliation possible. Moreover, Copeland argues that Davis poses the study of Church history with its critical capacity as a “graced countersign, an

\textsuperscript{28} Copeland, "Building up a Household of Faith," 61.

\textsuperscript{29} Ochs, 715.

\textsuperscript{30} Copeland, "Building up a Household of Faith," 62.
incarnational bridge, a sacramental union that makes us all pilgrims, climbing together through time and space.\textsuperscript{31}

Massingale maintains that Davis’ intellectual project revealed an organic connection to the lived experience of one’s racial and faith community. Davis demonstrated a commitment to speaking uncomfortable yet necessary truths within the Church, which challenged its propensity to ally itself in ways both subtle and direct with the American endemic culture of white racism. He has unearthed the suppressed and tragic memories of institutional complicity in the subjugation and humiliation of persons of African descent.\textsuperscript{32} According to Davis, “It is the Church’s mission to transform society. It is a Catholic’s duty to correct a wrong opinion regarding human rights.”\textsuperscript{33}

Father Cyprian Davis died on May 15, 2015.\textsuperscript{34} He is remembered as having exemplified a generosity of spirit toward racial adversaries, including those within the Church. He was able to distinguish between the core essentials of Catholic faith and its flawed institutional manifestations, even when Black Catholics had to fight for their faith “with members of their own household.”\textsuperscript{35} They were a group that

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{32} Massingale, “Cyprian Davis and the Black Catholic Intellectual Vocation,” 79.


\textsuperscript{34} “Benedictine Fr. Cyprian Davis, Top Chronicler of Black Catholic History Dies.”

\textsuperscript{35} Davis, The History of Black Catholics, 259.
“she (the Church) treated as stepchildren, the last considered and the first to be jettisoned when funds and personnel was scarce.”

Massingale asserts that Davis’ project witnessed to the power of memory to inspire future hope — hope rooted not only in a community’s dogged refusal to acquiesce to the limits imposed by society and Church, but also in the God who claimed and stamped them with an indelible mark of dignity and worth. Without Davis’ work, IBCS students would not have access to the historical context of Black Catholicism, a background that is critical for the development of Black Catholic consciousness and pride. In 1999, Davis was among those scholars who urged the IBCS administration to sharpen the African American perspective on all areas of academic, catechetical, liturgical and formational experiences, describing African American Catholics as, “still a buried treasure, still unmined gold.” Alumnus Orida Edwards credits Davis with writing Black Catholic history into Catholic history, and maintains that the IBCS assists students in the process of recovering, reclaiming, and preserving Black Catholic history. Along with Cecilia Moore’s course, History of Black Catholicism, Davis’ imprint was evident in Rev. Dwight Webster’s course, The Spirituals, which emphasized the importance of studying the origins, meanings, and purposes of Black spirituals and the significance of understanding the

36 Ibid.


39 Edwards, interview.

40 Moore, “History of Black Catholicism.”
foundation of African American culture on Black Catholic worship, catechesis, and pastoral ministry. In addition, Rev. Freddie Washington’s course on Jesus was designed with a historical perspective, giving particular attention to the interests of people of African descent.

While promoting the gift of Black Catholicism, Davis’ understanding of ecclesial racism also provides the impetus for essential reforms within the American Church. Alumnus, Bishop Brendan Cahill believes that the IBCS could be a genuine dialogue partner with the USCCB in an effort to end racist practices in vocation recruitment and formation. Former IBCS Director, Rev. Joseph Brown, maintains the need for USCCB support of the IBCS, arguing that culturally competent ministers are needed in Black Catholic communities. He argues that seminarians, particularly those from Africa, must learn Black American culture and how to minister to American Black Catholics. Otherwise, Black Catholics will remain continually subjected to discriminatory practices that limit the practice of their faith and, ultimately, diminish their numbers. Finally, Davis’ historical project establishes the context for Copeland’s theological writings and Massingale’s ethical work, which together have enhanced the IBCS curriculum, advancing it in the direction of racial reconciliation and solidarity.

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41 Webster, "The Spirituals."

42 Washington, "Jesus Christ: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow."
M. Shawn Copeland, Systematic Theologian

M. Shawn Copeland was raised in Detroit, Michigan and educated in parochial and private schools. Copeland first learned about the Shoah in the 7th grade and it struck her deeply that Christian leaders with a disregard for human life could stigmatize others and eradicate groups of people. She related the Shoah to the African American struggle to be fully human and to truly belong in a hostile environment. From that time, her theological concerns have been expressed under the rubric of theological anthropology, which seeks to understand the meaning and purpose of existence within the context of divine revelation.\(^{43}\) Theological anthropology poses questions such as: What does it mean to be human? What does it mean to be human from a Christian point of view? Copeland understands the characterization of this lack of belonging as “race”; the degradation of God’s human creation greatly concerns her and has formed both her personhood and theology.\(^{44}\)

Copeland earned her Ph.D. in Systematic Theology from Boston College with a dissertation on the notion of the human good in the thought of theologian and philosopher Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984). Before returning to Boston College as a faculty member in 2003, she taught at St. Norbert College, Yale Divinity School, and Marquette University. Significant for this study, Copeland taught systematic theology regularly in the degree program at the IBCS from 1994-2005,\(^{45}\) and in


\(^{44}\) Margot Patterson, “Complete Interview with M. Shawn Copeland,” *National Catholic Reporter* (July 16, 2003), NCRonline.org (accessed July 15, 2016).

\(^{45}\) M. Shawn Copeland, Faculty Biography, Boston College, College of Arts and Sciences, Theology Department, [http://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/theology/faculty/scopeland.html](http://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/theology/faculty/scopeland.html) (accessed 7/2/15).
2000, she was named Associate Director of the Th.M. Program, a position she held until 2005.\(^6\) Like Sister Jamie Phelps, her theology has had significant impact on the ethos of the IBCS as well as systematic theology from a Black perspective.

Copeland is a prolific writer with more than 100 publications to her credit. Some of her more important works include: *Enfleshing Freedom: body, race and being* (2010), and *The Subversive Power of Love: The Vision of Henriette Delille* (2009), and she is the principal editor of *Uncommon Faithfulness: The Black Catholic Experience* (2009). Copeland has lectured extensively on college and university campuses on topics related to theological anthropology, political theology, social suffering, gender, and race. She is recognized as one of the most influential voices in North America in drawing attention to issues surrounding African American Catholics. Copeland has been the recipient of many awards, including the Yves Congar Award for Excellence in Theology from Barry University, Miami, and the Distinguished Scholar Award from the Black Religious Scholars Group of the American Academy of Religion, as well as five honorary degrees. She was the first Black woman to serve as President of the Catholic Theological Society of America (2003-2004) and was a convener of the Black Catholic Theological Symposium (2001-2004). Currently, Copeland is Professor of Systematic Theology at Boston College, where she teaches graduate students preparing for the doctorate in Theology and undergraduate students in the PULSE program, which is an interactive social justice program that also encourages discussion of classic and contemporary

\(^6\) History, *IBCS Website*, 3-5.
works of philosophy and theology. Copeland additionally directs the Interdisciplinary Program in African and African Diaspora Studies.\textsuperscript{47}

Copeland’s theological career has been marked by constant interrogation and interruption of socially dehumanizing practices such as racism.\textsuperscript{48} Like historian Davis and ethicist Massingale, she identifies the Church’s complicity with racism, noting that the entanglement of Christianity with chattel slavery and anti-Black racism formed a set of deep and confusing paradoxes. Christianity not only failed to defy slavery and condemn tolerance of racism, but it supported and benefited from its evils and ignored the Gospel. Copeland views racism as a sin against the body of Christ, a defilement of the sacrament and the celebration of the Eucharist, a disruption of the bonds of charity and love that draw us into union with God and one another, and a mockery of the self-gift of the One who nourishes us with his very flesh and blood.\textsuperscript{49}

\textit{Copeland and the Gift of Black Catholicism} Similar to Davis, Copeland promotes the richness of Black Catholic culture. A highlight of Copeland’s article, “Tradition and the Traditions of African American Catholicism” (2000), is her reading of the contemporary Black Catholic revival of African cultural retentions through the lens of popular religion. Popular religion is described as a people’s

\textsuperscript{47} M. Shawn Copeland, Faculty Biography, Boston College, College of Arts and Sciences.


energetic response and living engagement with a faith tradition, which may complement institutional religion. In African American popular Catholicism, practices such as pouring libation, ancestor veneration, rites of passage, celebration of Kwanzaa, the installation of elders, the iconography of the cross, and Marian devotion and iconography are celebrated.\textsuperscript{50} The IBCS incorporates several of these rituals within its curriculum, most particularly, the annual Ancestor Commemoration, which Copeland describes in detail in her article.\textsuperscript{51} As a womanist theologian, Copeland identifies the body as “the medium through which the person, as essential freedom, achieves and realizes selfhood through communion with other bodied selves.”\textsuperscript{52} Understanding the spirituality of Black people as an “embodied spirituality” necessitates value-laden experiences and relationships that emerge whenever they are shared deeply.\textsuperscript{53} The vibrant ceremonies celebrated at the IBCS demonstrate the particular gift of Black Catholic spirituality to the Black Catholic community and the American Church.\textsuperscript{54}

\textit{Copeland and Black Catholic Theology}  As a systematic theologian, Copeland is concerned with the locus and processes for producing effective Black Catholic theology. Her contribution to the IBCS is, therefore, principally academic through her enhancement of the theological degree program. Copeland’s theology challenges white supremacy and white privilege within and outside of the American Church. A

\textsuperscript{50} Copeland, "Method in Emerging Black Catholic Theology," in \textit{Taking Down our Harps}, 646-647.

\textsuperscript{52} Copeland, \textit{Enfleshing Freedom}, 24.

\textsuperscript{53} Hayes, \textit{Forged in the Fiery Furnace}, 160-161.
knowledge of Black Catholic theology supports leadership skills for those who wish to direct Black Catholic communities toward solidarity, while working for racial justice. As womanist theologian, Copeland is concerned with the survival of an entire people, of every race and ethnicity, and believes that there can be no solidarity unless justice is possible for all. In Enfleshing Freedom, she uses the narrative accounts of slaves and the lived experiences of African American women to provide a theological perspective that speaks to the oppression of Black women due to race, class, and gender. These “truth-telling” accounts are necessary components in the process of racial reconciliation.

Black Catholic Theological Methodology  Copeland’s chapter, “Method in Emerging Black Catholic Theology” (1998), in Taking Down Our Harps: Black Catholics in the United States, summarizes the methodology necessary for an effective Black Catholic theology, and is, therefore, a piece central to the Integrative Practicum for degree students at the IBCS. She argues that the determinative aspect or the place from which Black Catholic theology is done is the despised Black identity.

Copeland uses social analysis as a tool to concretize the U.S. social and cultural matrix and to clarify the ambiguous interdependence of the “first” and “two thirds” worlds, accentuating the notion of the common good as a way of pursuing

56 Hayes, Forged in the Fiery Furnace, 154.
57 Copeland, “Method in Emerging Black Catholic Theology,” 120-121.
the investigation. She states that her work is directed toward developing a politically responsible methodical theology of social transformation, which utilizes Bernard Lonergan’s *structure of the human good* in formulating, asking, and answering questions that get at the meaning of development and progress (or devolution and decline) of the common human good in the U.S. context.  

According to Copeland, the work of Enlightenment philosophers lent credibility to the idea that skin pigmentation or race gave white men intellectual, moral, social, cultural and spiritual superiority; political, economic, and technological supremacy ultimately followed. By legitimizing biology as human destiny, those with Blackness were naturally meant to be perpetually slaves. Copeland instead maintains that to name oneself Black is at once critical, commemorative, and celebratory. Blackness requires a creative and courageous struggle with the condition of having been deprived of land, language, and culture. In addition, Blackness commemorates the daring and the doings of those of African descent who forged a path for their community in faith. Finally, Blackness celebrates God’s image within the Black person. Copeland traces the origins of Black Theology in the mid-1960s and notes it proposed a critical reading of the U.S. religious, cultural, and social condition in light of the life, passion, death, and resurrection of

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58 Ibid., 129-130.

59 Ibid., 121.
Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{60} She defined the key interactive elements of Black Catholic theological reflection as critique, retrieval, social analysis and construction.\textsuperscript{61}

Black Catholic theology critiques Christian scripture, Catholic tradition, symbols, and ecclesial structures in order to expose mythical narratives that sustain oppression. Retrieval of overlooked sources of Black culture and history, relies on critical historical method, which is a two-pronged archaeological process directed toward examining the unnoticed sources along with those of lived Roman Catholic faith. Copeland’s theological methodology appropriates the African-derived religio-cultural traditions of an enslaved people by posing a notion of base-line religious consciousness expressed in Black religion. This phenomenological rather than denominational heuristic is one in which Africa and African fragments hold a more or less normative status, while Christianity furnishes language, images, and symbols through which the enslaved peoples interpreted their condition and mediated transformed meanings.\textsuperscript{62} This approach examines the African experience first, while appreciating the Christian sources through which the slaves interpreted their experience. Copeland advocates unmasking, naming, and casting out white supremacy, while illustrating how slaves collaborated with God to make a way out of no way.\textsuperscript{63} As a womanist theologian, Copeland uses the “stuff” of women’s lives to

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 122-123.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 126-127.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 128.

\textsuperscript{63} Copeland, “There is No Promised Land Beyond the Temple Door,” \textit{Union Seminary Quarterly Review} 58, no.3-4 (2004):169.
spin a narrative of their persistent effort to rise above and beyond those persons and situations, which attempt to hold them down.\textsuperscript{64}

Copeland concludes her chapter on methodology asserting that Black Catholic theology incorporates a practice of “creative fidelity.” While it attends to the dogmatic tradition of the Church, Black Catholic theology focuses on social sins and, therefore, normally emphasizes Catholic social teaching, without rejecting Catholic doctrine or dogma.\textsuperscript{65} Copeland’s methodology is foundational for IBCS students who must learn the purpose and function of Black Catholic theology. Her methodology uncovers the core of Black Catholic experience while providing the tools for navigating the stormy waters of ecclesial racism in a spirit of Christian hope.

\textit{A New Locus for Black Catholic Theology} In 2010, Copeland wrote \textit{Enfleshing Freedom: body, race and being}, which focuses the Christian question of what being human means on the body, particularly the bodies of Black women. Copeland argues that to privilege suffering bodies in theological anthropology uncovers the suffering body at the heart of Christian belief—Jesus Christ. Reflection on the body of Jesus and the bodies of Black women lay bare both the human capacity for inhumanity and the divine capacity for love.\textsuperscript{66}

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\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{64} Diana L. Hayes, “And When We Speak: To Be Black, Catholic and Womanist,” in \textit{Taking Down Our Harps}, 106.
\item \textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 133-135.
\item \textsuperscript{66} Copeland, introduction to \textit{Enfleshing Freedom}, 1.
\end{enumerate}
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Five basic convictions ground her discussion of theological anthropology: that the body is a site and mediation of divine revelation; that the body shapes human existence as relational and social; that the creativity of the Triune God is manifested in differences of gender, race, and sexuality; that solidarity is a set of body practices; and that the Eucharist orders and transforms our bodies as the body of Christ. Privileging the Black woman’s body makes these claims specific and particular; taking the Black woman’s body as a starting point for theological anthropology allows for the interrogation of the impact of all demonization in history.67

Copeland, like Davis and Massingale, argues that slavery continues to impact American culture because it “calibrated values in core [American] institutions,” including the family, religion, government, commerce, labor, education, and entertainment.68 She contends that the most vivid reminder and remainder of slavery is the Black body; Enfleshing Freedom makes visible Black bodies in pain in order to move aside “that veil drawn over ‘proceedings too terrible to relate.’”69 The full meaning of religious freedom is clarified only in grappling strenuously with the “dangerous memory” of slavery. The suffering and death of Jesus of Nazareth rebukes our national amnesia regarding enslaved bodies and the indifference to Black bodies.70

67 Ibid., 2.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid., 3.
70 Ibid.
By raising the painful memory of slavery, Copeland interrogates memory and history for the sake of freedom. Black women began the healing of their flesh and subjectivity in the *there-and then*, in the midst of enslavement; their enfleshment of freedom is caught up and realized in the abiding presence of the resurrected body of Jesus. In this way, Copeland contends that she has theologically fulfilled a responsibility to the dead by challenging the reader to respect the dignity of suffering that has accumulated in history.\(^{71}\)

In the middle of *Enfleshing Freedom*, Copeland shifts the principal historical and social context for thinking about bodies to exercises of imperial power—*pax Romana, pax Americana*. The body of Jesus of Nazareth presents a formidable entry point for the scandal of particularity in theological anthropology: because of the marks of that Body (gender, race, sex, culture); because of that Body’s openness to turn toward and experience solidarity with even radically different others; and because of that Body’s pledge to be given and poured out for *all* others across time and space. Because of Christ’s body, theological anthropology requires the Church to embrace all bodies. Copeland maintains that a theological anthropology worthy of reclaiming Black women’s bodies is worthy of reclaiming all *human* bodies.\(^{72}\)

Copeland’s work insists that Catholic theological ethics take seriously the profound nexus between race and gender. For Copeland, race and gender are “co-constitutive.” Human bodies are simultaneously “raced” and “gendered” and these

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\(^{71}\) Ibid., 3-4.

\(^{72}\) Ibid., 4-5.
categories mutually and reciprocally influence the fates of social groups. This requires a major rethinking of Catholic sexual ethics as to how sex-based violence functions as a means of social subjugation and racial dominance. Additionally, it affirms that gender never arrives without race and class. Copeland’s project reframes the discussion of same-sex ethics through the interrogation of the heterosexual service of white male privilege. Indeed, Copeland poses the haunting question, “Can Jesus of Nazareth be an option for gays and lesbians?” She forthrightly responds, “If Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God, cannot be an option for gays and lesbians, then he cannot be an option.” This question demands a serious reconsideration of Christology and has profound implications for Catholic moral theology and Christian discipleship.

Finally, Copeland’s work treats the virtue of solidarity in light of the ethical implications of Eucharistic anamnesis. Given the social order that treats poor woman of color with disdain, the summons towards solidarity is of the highest ethical priority. Copeland argues that authentic solidarity is performative and leads to effective and courageous praxis, which is an understanding she grounds in the Eucharistic action of the faith community. For Copeland, solidarity stems from anamnesis, that is, an intentional re-membering of history’s victims. And this memory finds its most privileged expression in Eucharistic worship, which forms

73 Ibid.
74 Copeland, Enfleshing Freedom, 77-78.
75 Massingale, “Has the Silence Been Broken?” 140.
our social imagination, transforms our values, and transforms the meaning of being human, especially by investing exploited and despised Black bodies with eschatological meaning. Such solidarity demands forms of social discipleship that are both uneasy with racial and gendered forms of marginalization and active in a struggle to overcome them. Implicit in Copeland’s reflection is a call for expanded Catholic theological ethics, which more deeply appreciates the inherent social consequence in a world rent by racial supremacy and gendered domination.76

*Enfleshing Freedom* influenced both Black and white theologians to consider this new locus of theological anthropology and its implications for achieving genuine solidarity. In his review of *Enfleshing Freedom*, Bryan Massingale argues that although the monograph is specifically a work of theological anthropology, it has great significance for theological ethics. First, Copeland advances a “new anthropological subject” for Christian theological and ethical concern, that is, exploited, despised, poor women of color. What this means, insists Massingale, is that the poor and despised, who are doubly burdened by race and gender, can do theological ethics. They have the ability, from the theoretical standpoint, to challenge the unnamed white/European and male hegemony that has characterized Catholic moral reflection for so long.77

According to Christopher Conway, Assistant Professor of Theology at St. Benedict College, St. Joseph, Minnesota, Copeland requires the reader to recall and

76 Ibid.

77 Massingale, “Has the Silence Been Broken,” 139-140.
confront those dangerous memories of slavery, the lynching tree, and the physical, existential, and sexual violence such systemic objectification wrought on those bodies. This re-membering advances through the present and, thereby, challenges theological anthropology to address current questions of the body and embodiment in relation to racism, sexism, homophobia, and imperialism.78 Christopher Pramuk, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio, asserts that the telling of stories, a hallmark of Copeland’s mature theology, renders a vivid protest against the anaesthetizing and “innocent” meta-narratives such as “the American dream” or the “Enlightenment.” Christian solidarity necessitates remembering in a particular way, which would be through the eyes of the vanquished. This profound epistemological rupture implies a radical critique of both the dominant “master narratives” and the subject at the center of these narratives: the white male bourgeois European.79

Copeland’s theology galvanizes the reader and delivers a sting. “In the twilight of American culture,” she writes, “telling the truth about white racist supremacy is a theological obligation, no matter how cauterizing those truths may be.”80 “Marginalized and oppressed communities,” Copeland writes, “employ a rhetoric of protest to provoke a conversion and/or transformation that is to be

78 Christopher Conway, “M. Shawn Copeland: Enfleshing Freedom: body, race, and being,” Journal of Interdisciplinary Feminist Thought 4, no. 1 (June 1, 2010), digitalcommons.slave.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1032&content (accessed August 18, 2016).


realized concretely in practices of solidarity.”⁸¹ Dangerous memory⁸² is central to Copeland’s methodology because the alternative — apathy, complicity — is hardly acceptable. Black theology fixes our eyes on the signs of the times from the vantage point of persons already troubled. This rhetoric of protest is faithful to the dead; for African Americans, the historical record of corporate suffering casts the ancestors in a distinctive role as a certain kind of presence. If we could imagine the “cloud of witnesses” filled with fifty million souls torn from Africa, it becomes an ominous storm cloud.⁸³ As Copeland writes, “the memory of the victims of such malevolence pleads with us.”⁸⁴

Copeland’s systemic theology is liberationist in intent, taking into account the holistic spirituality and contextual suffering of the American Black Catholic. Her theological writings have developed a Lonerganian application to racism; a designation of the poor black woman’s body as the new subject of theological anthropology; and the inclusion of sex/gender issues and ecclesial homophobia. Her “sting” is real and necessary for a Church that refuses to recognize the cancer of racism within its structures, which each day strengthens its complicity leading to moral demise. Copeland charges all with the responsibility of living life in authentic solidarity, which requires that both the oppressed and the oppressor act decisively

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⁸⁴ Copeland, “Racism and the Vocation,” 16.
to transform the paradigm. By placing the Black female body at the center of her theological reflection, Copeland demands that issues of gender remain co-constitutive with issues of race. Further, where race, sex/gender, and sexuality, shape, and often distort, the power of privileged groups, she rejects the dehumanizing white social construct of beauty and goodness.

Copeland gifts the IBCS with a theological methodology and focus that challenge ecclesial racism and white privilege in the spirit of ultimate solidarity. This contribution is most apparent in the Integrative Colloquium, which is a required course for all IBCS degree students.\textsuperscript{85} Copeland’s rejection of white male European “Enlightenment” narratives was evident in Brian T. Turner’s course, Lead, Follow, Or Get Out of the Way: When Leaders Need to Be Led or Checked, where he emphasized a paradigm shift from a European-centric to an African-centric model. Turner stressed the need to reconnect with African traditions, cultures, and practices.\textsuperscript{86} Alumnus Orida Edwards commented on the “indescribable” cultural component of the IBCS, where the wisdom of the ancestors could be embraced through the ancestral celebration, the MAAFA commemoration, vespers, culture night, and the liturgical experiences.\textsuperscript{87} Copeland’s methodology and womanist perspective, which are concerned with all humanity while promoting an African-American cultural viewpoint, is a timely approach for an academic community that

\textsuperscript{85} Malu Nyimi, "Integrative Colloquium."

\textsuperscript{86} Turner, “Lead, Follow, or Get Out of the Way.”

\textsuperscript{87} Edwards, interview.
is in the process of expanding its role as a vanguard of racial reconciliation and solidarity.

**Bryan N. Massingale, Theologian and Social Ethicist**

Since the 1990s, Rev. Bryan N. Massingale S.T.D., has served as a professor, Chair of the Curriculum Committee, and guest lecturer at the IBCS. Massingale experienced racism at an early age; his father, who earned his associate degree in carpentry from Milwaukee’s technical college in the mid-1950s, could not land a job due to the union’s unwritten edict of Black exclusion. Forced into unskilled labor, Massingale’s father could afford only local housing projects for his family. On the positive side, Massingale notes that his grandmother was a major influence in both his life of faith and sense of scholarship. Although glowing with pride when she attended Massingales’s college commencement ceremony from Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and viewed his diploma, his grandmother’s first question was, “Now, who are you going to help with it? What are you going to use it for?” Massingale decided to serve as a priest and after graduating from St. Francis Seminary in Milwaukee, he eventually earned a Doctorate in Sacred Theology (S.T.D) from the Academia Alphonsianum in Rome.

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88 History, *IBCS Website*, 3-5.


90 Ibid. 173-174.

Not only would Massingale make his grandmother proud, he maintains that her profound questions should be the vocational questions asked of all Black Catholic theologians as well as for all people in general.\footnote{Massingale, Racial Justice and the Catholic Church, 174.} Massingale wrote \textit{Racial Justice and the Catholic Church} because he is convinced that the Black experience, which he argues is essentially that of creating meaning and possibility in the midst of the crushing ordinariness of American racism, could make a valuable and essential contribution to Catholic faith and theology.\footnote{Ibid., ix.}

Massingale has authored over 70 articles, book chapters, and book reviews on the subjects of social ethics, Catholic social thought, African American religious ethics, liberation theologies, and racial justice. His current research projects explore the contribution of Black religious radicalism to Catholic theology; the notion of cultural sin and its challenge to Catholic theological ethics; and the intersection of race and sexuality in both society and Catholicism.\footnote{Rev. Bryan Massingale faculty biography, \texttt{www.marquetter.edu}. (accessed July 28, 2016).} Massingale taught at Marquette University for many years until joining the theology faculty at Fordham University in the fall of 2016.\footnote{Patrick Verel, “Leading Scholar of African-American Theological Ethics to Join Fordham,” \textit{Fordham News: The Latest from Fordham University}, (February 11, 2016), \texttt{http://news.fordham.edu/faith-} (accessed July 23, 2016).}

Massingale is the Past Convener of the B.C.T.S. and a former president of the C.T.S.A. He serves on boards of scholarly journals (\textit{Journal of Moral Theology} and \textit{The Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics}), and has been the recipient of several
honorary degrees, as well as receiving Marquette’s highest award for teaching excellence in 2009. In addition to his academic pursuits, Massingale strives to be a scholar activist by serving faith-based groups that are dedicated to advancing justice in society. He is a noted authority on issues of social and racial justice and has lectured at colleges and universities across the nation. Massingale has served as a consultant to the USCCB on issues of criminal justice, capital punishment, environmental justice, and affirmative action. He has been a consultant to the NBCC, Catholic Charities USA, Catholic Relief services, National Catholic Aids Network, and the antiracism teams of Call for Action and Pax Christi, USA. He is an active participant in a network of Catholic leaders striving for full inclusion of LGBTQ persons in society and the faith community. Massingale’s contributions to justice advocacy have received widespread recognition.96

Massingale and Racial Justice and Reconciliation Massingale’s Racial Justice in the Catholic Church (2009) analyzes American Catholic social thought on racism and seeks to discover how Catholic teaching and ethical reflection can be enriched by the contribution of the African American experience.97 As an ethicist, Massingale is less concerned with the overall history of Black Catholicism or Black Catholic theological method than the question: “How can we struggle together against an evil

96 Ibid.

that harms us all, though in different ways."  

Like Copeland, Massingale's perception of racism is largely informed by Bernard Lonergan's definition of culture, which is "a set of meanings and values that inform the way of life of a community."  

For Massingale, racism refers to a set of meanings and values, or "culture," "attached to skin color" and a way of interpreting skin color differences that pervades the collective convictions, conventions, and practices of American life.

Similar to Copeland, Massingale argues that racism functions as an ethos or as the animating spirit of U.S. society, which lives on despite observable changes and assumes various incarnations in different historical circumstances.  

Massingale asserts that a racist culture manifests itself in the structural realities of American life. The common culture for African Americans is the experience of both subtle and overt racial prejudice, discrimination, rejection, and hostility, based on the simple fact of physical Blackness. In agreement with both Davis and Copeland, Massingale contends that the historical event that melded the diverse African American people was slavery and its aftermath and, therefore, the soul of the African American culture is struggle. He argues that the soul of the white culture is invisible and unnamed, that is, it is a frame of reference that is unquestioned because it is the norm by which all other frames of reference (cultures) are

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98 Massingale, Racial Justice and the Catholic Church, xiv.


100 Massingale, Racial Justice and the Catholic Church, 15.

101 Ibid., 14-15.
recognized. If a key component of Black culture is the expectation of struggle, then
the core element of white culture is the presumption of dominance and
entitlement.\textsuperscript{102}

To Massingale, white privilege, “an invisible package of unearned assets,”\textsuperscript{103}
is the reason for both the ongoing presence of racism and the resistance that efforts
to unseat it encounter. White privilege shifts the focus from how people of color are
harmed by racism to how white Americans derive advantages because of it. Racial
injustice comes about to preserve and protect white privilege, which is a status that
has been intentionally constructed over a long period of time. Although most
Americans are committed to interpersonal decency, the nation is still bound to a
culture of white supremacy. For the most part, whites adhere to a set of cultural
assumptions, beliefs, and convictions that justify a “kinder gentler” racism. Because
of this, Massingale argues that U.S. Catholic ethical reflections must adopt a
structural and systemic approach to racism that approaches this social evil as a
cultural phenomenon.\textsuperscript{104}

\textit{Massingale and Ecclesial Racism} Massingale critiques the three USCCB
statements (1958, 1968, and 1979) on racism and explains they are lacking in
both depth and rigor when compared to many other social justice statements. The
dominant, yet ineffective, approach of the Catholic Church in terms of combatting

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 19-20, 24.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., 37.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 36-42.
\end{flushright}
racism remains good manners, education, reason, and interracial dialogue.

Although *Brothers and Sisters to Us* (1979) was a strongly worded document that forcefully and unequivocally condemned racism as an evil and a sin, there was no formal plan for implementation. Massingale asserts that the “Us” in the title of the document demonstrates that it was written for white Catholics, thereby prompting them to make concessions to Blacks rather than encouraging Blacks to press for social justice. The 25th anniversary study of the document (2004) painted a dismal picture of the Catholic community’s relationship with African Americans. Aside from a few bishop’s statements (Francis George, Archdiocese of Chicago, Illinois, 2001; Dale Melczek, Diocese of Gary, Indiana 2003; and Alfred Hughes, Archdiocese of New Orleans, Louisiana, 2006), which acknowledged the structural nature of racism, addressed white privilege, and recognized the faith community’s complicity with racism, episcopal condemnation of racism continues to lack passion and commitment.¹⁰⁵

Massingale promotes a more adequate Catholic engagement through the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist; interracial solidarity; the option for the poor; and laments and compassion as core practices and virtues. He defines laments as “cries of anguish and outrage, groans of deep pain and grief, utterances of profound protest and righteous indignation over injustices and wails of mourning and sorrow in the face of unbearable suffering.”¹⁰⁶ Lamentation is rooted in a trust that God

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¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 43-44, 67, 70, 72, 75, 77.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 105.
hears the cry; it holds together both loss and hope in ways that defy easy rational understanding. A key assumption of his work is that Christian faith has a valuable and essential role to play in the effort to bring about a more racially just society. Articulating a spirit of racial resistance is important: 1) To negotiate the major shifts of identity and valuing needed to overcome the entrenched biases of our historical conditioning; and 2) To undertake material sacrifices needed for a more just distribution of social resources. Radical acts of social relocation, economic redistribution, or racial reconciliation will not happen unless all can see their own life stories as part of a larger theological narrative. Massingale argues that situating our ethical strivings in the context of a larger, broader, and deeper narrative, within an alternative cultural set of meaning and values, is an important and even indispensable contribution that religious faith can make toward the achievement of a more racially just society.

For Massingale, the point of racial reconciliation is to engage in an adventure of theological pioneering, since the “forgiveness” is not sought between antagonistic individuals but between estranged racial groups. Among the questions he poses are: What contribution does a Christian theo-ethical imagination bring to the effort to overcome longstanding and deeply entrenched racial antipathies and injustices? What contribution does our faith make in the new beginning we long for and so

107 Ibid., 84-85.

desperately need? He argues that racial reconciliation is not and should not be peripheral to the interests and concerns of Christian theologians and ethicists.\textsuperscript{109}

Massingale defines racial reconciliation as the process of healing the estrangement, division, and hostility among racial groups by overturning or severing the linkage between race and social, cultural, and/or political subordination or dominance. He maintains that until the nexus between race, power, and privilege is overcome, relations between racial groups will be marked by resentment, suspicion, mistrust, and hostility. There can be no authentic reconciliation without a struggle for justice due to the historical absence and miscarriage of justice. Massingale highlights two processes that are critical for interracial reconciliation, telling the truth and affirmative redress.\textsuperscript{110}

Telling the truth, similar to Copeland’s “theological obligation to speak,” entails facing history and requires a shifting or reframing of the social narrative, which challenges selective and partial recollections. An example would be admitting that the horror of slavery continues into the present through a rarely acknowledged legacy, that is, slavery lives as a largely unconscious way of framing how Black Americans are seen, how they see themselves, and how they relate to the world. Affirmative redress requires reparation, which repairs damaged social relationships by removing the systemic barriers that impede a racial or ethnic group’s full participation in American life. Social harm calls for social relief such as affirmative

\textsuperscript{109} Massingale, \textit{Racial Justice and the Catholic Church}, 85-87.

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 90-91, 96-97.
action to compensate for a history of publicly sponsored exclusion and segregation and to minimize the occurrence of present and future discrimination with the goal of creating a just and inclusive society.\textsuperscript{111}

In terms of racial reconciliation, the Catholic tradition includes the resources of distributive justice, social sin, an understanding of the Gospel that entails a stance of solidarity, and a decisive commitment on behalf of the poor, dispossessed, and socially vulnerable. The preconscious and non-rational character of racism engages us viscerally, and makes it, at its deepest level, impervious to rational appeals and cognitive strategies. Massingale asserts that racial reconciliation and justice require a response of lament, which stems from and leads to deep compassion.\textsuperscript{112}

Racial injustice cannot be defeated solely or even principally through intellectual responses. Massingale believes that lamentation is essential for truth telling and affirmation redress to be successful in a culture of racialized privilege and indifference, which is inhabited by a people uneasy with injustice but unwilling to pay the price to eradicate it. Through lament, individuals become aware that regardless of racial designation, all are injured by an unjust racial ideology. Realization and confession is possible only by the mercy of God.\textsuperscript{113}

Honest lament gives rise to a deep sense of compassion, which is the visceral response of entering into the suffering that motivated Jesus to perform miracles,

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 98-103.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 103-105.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 107, 110-111, 113.
\end{flushright}
moving him beyond the social boundaries decreed by culture and custom.\textsuperscript{114}

According to theologian Maureen O’Connell, “Compassion overrides social, cultural, racial, economic, and religious boundaries.”\textsuperscript{115} Seen in this light, it is an essential element of racial reconciliation and justice making, as lament is not just sorrow, but action taken to meet the other’s need. Compassion gives rise to solidarity, which is the key virtue in Catholic social thought that leads to recognition of the need for mutual human responsibility and care. Solidarity is, therefore, a deep-rooted conviction that the concerns of the despised are the concerns of all. This experience goes beyond being a “white ally” to a Black neighbor, because the urgency of justice appears only when the bounds of racialized culture are shattered. Massingale insists that without the cultivation of such solidarity, rooted in lament, compassion, and transformative love, truth telling and affirmative redress result in superficial palliatives that leave the deep roots of injustice undisturbed.\textsuperscript{116}

Massingale considers three Church practices that support the formation of an authentic racial identity: conversion, baptism, and the celebration of the Eucharist. He finds Bernard Lonergan’s understanding of conversion to be helpful: a fundamental shift in one’s paradigm of understanding, interpreting, and acting upon reality. Racial solidarity is a paschal experience that entails dying to a false sense of self and a renunciation of racial privilege so as to rise to a new identity and status

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 114.


\textsuperscript{116} Massingale, \textit{Racial Justice and the Catholic Church}, 115-118, 120.
that is God-given. The Christian community helps facilitate this difficult process by offering a faith based narrative that makes the journey from indifference to complicity, from sympathy to empathy and, finally, to solidarity, both comprehensible and worthwhile.\textsuperscript{117}

The social meaning of skin tone, Massingale insists, must not compromise the fundamental equality of the baptized. One of the most powerful contributions the Christian community can make toward the goal of racial justice is to celebrate the sacrament of baptism regularly, publicly, and well. Baptism demonstrates the reverence of life, regardless of color, that cannot be addressed by legislation or social policy. Also, the Eucharistic action carries subversive memory, as Jesus’ meals are foreign to the ways of the world because they were not about social identification, status, or power. Massingale contends that authentic worship cannot leave one at peace with social injustice. The common origin of the human family provides an essential unity despite distinctions of race, nationality, or ethnicity. The diversity of the human family is a divine blessing and mirrors the inner life of God.\textsuperscript{118}

Massingale’s work contributes to the IBCS curriculum in a variety of ways. He promotes the enrichment of Catholic teaching and ethical reflection through the contribution of the African American experience, while acknowledging that racism is a pervasive element of daily life. Racism, he argues, must be understood and, then,

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 121-122.

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 123-127.
eliminated by a structural and systematic approach. Massingale contends that a struggle for justice must precede genuine racial reconciliation. An understanding of core Catholic sacramental practices, social justice teachings, appropriate virtues, and how racial resistance fits within this context, is something that must be learned. The IBCS is a center for such education, with the potential of leading the Church to authentic racial solidarity. Massingale’s participation as the keynote speaker in the Black Lives Matter symposium, “Black Lives Matter: Race, Violence, and Poverty Symposium,” which was held through the IBCS at Xavier University in 2015, is his most recent and particular contribution to the Institute role in racial reconciliation at present and in the future.119

**Davis, Copeland, and Massingale: Some Common Themes**

Copeland’s and Massingale’s writings, as well as Davis’s historical work, contain common themes, which together continue to revitalize the culture of the IBCS. Several key imperatives that emerge from their work are promotion of a liberationist perspective; an understanding of the evolution of racism and its origins in slavery; and a comprehension of the enduring presence of white racist supremacy and white privilege in general and within the Church. Supplementing these concentrations are an absolute faith in Catholicism as a remedy for racist practices through both an examination and application of the Paschal Mystery; the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ; and an appreciation of the profound resolutions

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inherent in the Catholic sacramental system. The undisputed vision is an eventual life of genuine performative solidarity based upon true communion. These foci, steeped in responsible hope, are the essence of the “creative fidelity” evident in all that is the IBCS.

Copeland, Massingale, and Davis emphasize the primary necessity of hope in the struggle against racism, whether it is the hope of the Mystical Body of Christ expressed by Copeland, or the “blues hope” described by Massingale. The three scholars witness to the power of memory to inspire future hope, a hope rooted in God’s claim that all human creation is marked with dignity and worth. In addition, Copeland and Massingale look forward to ultimate racial solidarity. Copeland treats the virtue of solidarity in light of the ethical implications of Eucharistic anamnesis. Authentic solidarity is performative and leads to effective and courageous praxis, which is an understanding she grounds in the Eucharistic action of the faith community. For Copeland, solidarity stems from anamnesis, that is, an intentional re-membering of history’s victims.

Massingale argues that an honest lament give rise to a deep sense of compassion, which gives rise to solidarity. This key virtue in Catholic social thought leads to mutual recognition of one another and how we are given to each other’s care. Without the cultivation of such solidarity, rooted in lament, compassion, and transformative love, truth telling and affirmative redress result in superficial palliatives that leave the deep roots of injustice undisturbed.

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120 Massingale, "Cyprian Davis and the Black Catholic Intellectual Vocation," 81.
121 Massingale, Racial Justice and the Catholic Church, 115-118, 120.
The consolidation of their work, imbued with a spirit of responsible hope, continue to drive the Spirit-led struggle of the Black Catholic community as witnessed in the soul of IBCS. Looking forward to an expanded role for the IBCS in the area of racial reconciliation and ultimate solidarity, these scholars have contributed the historical, theological, and ethical foundations necessary for a sound academic program directed toward this end. These scholars contribute to the goal of the eventual elimination of ecclesial racism, which they recognize as a structural condition within the American Church. Racism and white privilege within the Catholic Church must be challenged for the good of the entire Church as well as to provide an authentic model for national racial reconciliation. The Church must get its “own house in order” or continue to suffer the dehumanizing consequences accorded to the oppressor.

In Conclusion: Three “Race Transcending” Prophets

The Institute for Black Catholic Studies was not established to battle racism or overturn white privilege; IBCS was created to raise awareness of the gift of Black Catholicism and to form those who would minister to Black Catholics. It must be recognized, nonetheless, that the Institute has flourished from within a culture of racism and has consistently addressed this evil to some extent throughout its core curriculum. It could be argued that Copeland, Massingale and Davis are what Cornel West describes as “race transcending prophets.”\(^{122}\) because their ultimate goal is not only consciousness-raising, but also communion, based upon reconciliation and

\(^{122}\) Ibid., 156-157.
healing. Their scholarship promotes solidarity through truth telling, and shatters the false notion of a “post racial society,” a bias that generates white Catholic denial and complacency. Without diluting the sin of racism, intellectual giants such as Davis, Copeland, and Massingale, promote the struggle toward unity in diversity; distinction without separation; and difference without division. They provide the IBCS with the academic footing to proceed forward as an agency of hope and racial solidarity.
Chapter Five
A Visit to the Institute for Black Catholic Studies

Much may be drawn from the literature pertaining to the Institute for Black Catholic Studies, but nothing demonstrates the value of the IBCS for the life of the Catholic Church more than an experience of the Institute itself. From July 13th through July 17th, 2015, I observed the third summer session of the IBCS program. Because the degree program is the only holistic graduate Theology program in pastoral ministry taught from a Black Catholic perspective in the United States, visiting the campus in session is essential.

Presence is critical for a determination of the Institute’s value as a resource for those ministering to Black Catholics. This chapter, therefore, will explore the Institute in progress, and include an examination of classes in session, as well as scheduled liturgical events. In addition, this section describes my personal encounters with the staff, faculty, and students of the IBCS, who are the lifeblood of the Institute. Finally, the chapter will conclude with interview and survey responses, both anonymous and named, of administrators, professors, alumni, and current students. The purpose of my visit, as well as that of the interviews and surveys was to discover: 1) If the IBCS stands as an effective source of ministry development for those who serve Black Catholics in the U.S.; 2) To determine if an awareness of the cultural and religious traditions inherent within Black Catholicism, as taught at the IBCS, benefit not only Black Catholics but the entire Church and; 3) To determine if
the IBCS has the potential to be a center for racial justice and, indeed, racial reconciliation within the Church.

Methodology

Data collection In January of 2015, I received permission from Father Maurice Nutt, Director of the IBCS, to visit the campus and observe classes, as well as to conduct surveys and interviews with staff, faculty, alumni, and students. My proposal was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Xavier University on May 1, 2015¹ and by the IRB at La Salle University on May 15, 2015², for the purpose of conducting surveys and interviews with members of the IBCS community. The Xavier IRB issued a discretionary expiration date, whereas the La Salle IRB protocol ended on April 7, 2017. The last telephone interview was conducted on November 13, 2015, and the final written interview response was received in September, 2016.

Nutt informed me that he would apprise the staff, faculty, and students of my visit prior to my arrival on July 13, 2015, and would indicate support for my visit. On the morning of my first day at the IBCS, I was introduced to the community by Nutt during Morning Praise. He welcomed me and asked that all cooperate with my research as much as possible, although he realized that it was the busy, final week of class. The purpose of my visit, he explained was to write a dissertation about the IBCS. My presence on campus was, therefore, obtrusive, as all were aware of my

¹ Xavier University Institutional Review Board, File #544, May 1, 2015.

identity and the purpose of my visit. There did not seem to be any objection to my appearance on campus and, in fact, the community was welcoming.

After my introduction to the IBCS community, I distributed survey packets to students as they left the chapel. Students were not forced to take a packet, and I was not accompanied by staff or faculty members, who may have intimidated the students. Faculty and staff members may have observed me disseminating surveys, but it was not apparent to me that they were scrutinizing this process. I continued to be available to distribute packets after liturgies for the next few days. Each packet included an informed consent form, which explained the purpose of the anonymous survey, as well as an envelope so that the surveys could be returned to me sealed and without identification. Students had the additional option of returning the survey to me by mail without the use of a return address. All surveys and written interviews were eventually stored in a locked file cabinet in my office.

During the course of the week, staff, faculty, and students scheduled one-on-one interviews with me at private locations on campus. They scheduled their interviews as they encountered me, for example, when we met outside of chapel, at lunch, or walking to class. To the best of my knowledge, no respondent was coerced into being interviewed. All respondents signed informed consent forms prior to the interview, and the responses were reported anonymously. Some of the respondents related that they were unsure why I wanted the surveys and interviews to be anonymous, but because I had requested anonymous surveys from both IRBs, anonymity was maintained. To my knowledge, I did not interview any member of the community who also completed a survey.
Mrs. Loretta Solomon, administrative assistant for the IBCS, worked with La Salle University Qualtrics to disseminate informed consent forms and anonymous surveys to the limited student/alumni data bases available at the Institute. I did not receive any results from the online survey. I did receive additional results from hardcopy anonymous student surveys distributed to students during the IBCS summer session of 2016.

To conduct off-campus interviews or to request telephone interviews, letters and informed consent forms were sent to 27 IBCS faculty/alumni in August 2015. These requests were mailed through the IBCS. As a result of this correspondence, I arranged four telephone interviews, and I received three written responses to the interview questions. These respondents had the option of having their names used in my dissertation and they all decided to do so. I must emphasize that the IBCS has limited administrative resources in terms of personnel, as well as online data banks. All of my research in this area was accomplished through distributed hard copy surveys, scheduled on-site or telephone interviews, and classroom observations. I consider the percentage of responses received to be very good considering the high community/response ratio.

The faculty had been apprised of the purpose of my visit and were told that I would be observing classes. I was welcomed to all classes with the exception of Dr. Dwight Webster’s course. He accepted my presence, yet he seemed uncertain about the purpose of my visit. Perhaps he did not receive Nutt’s memo, and I do not recall seeing Dr. Webster in chapel when I was introduced. Otherwise, there were no limitations or difficulties to surmount during my visit at the IBCS.
The IBCS Visit - Preliminaries

Prior to arriving at Xavier for my session at the Institute, I spent the week of April 26, 2015 conducting research in the University archives as arranged by Father Nutt. As mentioned in Chapter Three, Father Maurice, as he is personally known, has been associated with IBCS for the past thirty years, first as a student, then as a professor, as well as a pastor who sent parishioners to the Institute in order that they could become more effective leaders.

IBCS includes two distinct, but spiritually and communally connected, curriculums: The Degree program, which leads to a Th.M. in Pastoral Theology and the Continuing Education and Enrichment program (C & E), which provides ongoing education and formation for pastoral ministers for both Black Catholic communities and the Catholic Church at-large. While at the IBCS, I was permitted to visit classes and was able to observe all but one course. These experiences were essential in order to understand the two programs offered, the content of the individual courses, the approach of the professors, and the level of student participation. This knowledge was necessary in order to evaluate the academic component of the IBCS and appreciate how it relates to the overall impact of the Institute.

The degree program has been directed for the past two years by Kirk P. Gaddy, Ed.D. Dr. Gaddy arrived at the IBCS with years of experience in inner city Catholic education as a teacher, principal, teacher trainer, and member of the archdiocesan curriculum and strategic planning committee. The composite of these skills provided Dr. Gaddy with the background necessary to guide the IBCS degree
students as they prepare for ministry to Black Catholics in urban parishes and schools.

My first experience during my observation week, however, was an extraordinary para-liturgy: Morning Praise. Each morning at 8AM, the Institute begins with joyous, exuberant worship of God, in the magnificent yet elegantly simple Saint Katharine Drexel Chapel. The gemlike faceted design is the work of architect Cesar Pelli. One of the most outstanding aspects of the chapel is largely hidden: outside skylights, designed to allow the greatest amount of sunlight to penetrate, are obscured on the inside by an array of huge aluminum screens that begin just above head level and angle gently upward toward the 52-foot ceiling. As the natural glow from the skylights passes through the sheer silver screens, the walls and floors of the chapel are splashed with bright geometric patterns of light that shift throughout the day.³

The altar was decorated in an African motif that incorporated the liturgical green of Ordinary time. On the first morning of my visit, Dr. timone davis, (Dr. davis uses lower case letters to indicate that she decreases as God increases in her life and ministry), the Assistant Director of the Continuing Education and Enrichment Programs (C&E), delivered a reflection on the Samaritan woman at the well in such an engaging manner that the assembly was virtually spellbound. Throughout the week, a number of students and faculty members presented poignant reflections with the same sustained conviction, which were enveloped by jubilant music and

the active participation of the congregation. Faculty and students participated at Mass every noon in the Chapel; various priests from the community celebrated the liturgy each day exposing the assembly to a distinct style of invigorating preaching enhanced by exuberant music. A white priest and pastor, Father Matthew S. O’Donnell, C.R., who graduated from the IBCS degree program that week, delivered one particularly memorable homily. O’Donnell had developed a Black Catholic preaching style that, for the first few seconds, seemed incongruous when considering the youthful Irish-American homilist. The effectiveness of his preaching was categorically demonstrated thereby validating the heartfelt desire of Father O’Donnell to minister appropriately to Black Catholics within his parish, St. Columbanus, on the Southside of Chicago.4

**Observations**

*The Degree Track*  The first degree course I attended was Black Preaching I, taught by Rev. Maurice J. Nutt, C.Ss.R. The course was designed to survey both the literature and practical exercises in preaching oriented toward a Black congregation.5 Even considering that the class size was small, it was obvious that Father Nutt was well acquainted with his students’ individual strengths and weaknesses in terms of preaching, and he was determined that they would achieve optimal results in terms of personal improvement.

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5 IBCS 2015 Summer Program, brochure, June 29-July 17, 2015.
Nutt’s class consisted of several elements: an analysis of a recent trip where the students observed a Baptist preacher; an explanation of the seven components of effective Black Catholic preaching: storytelling, repetition, call and response, rhythm and rhyme, alliteration, intonation, and musicality; a review of Eugene L Lowry’s homiletic plot, which is a method of analyzing scripture for preaching; and an examination of the preaching style of Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie who is the first female bishop elected to the AME church.

Nutt explained that the preacher should be “a seed sower on your ground who can provoke and invoke.”\(^6\) The essential elements of Black Catholic preaching were explained as the Holy Spirit, Preaching, and Teaching for Celebrations, and Preaching for Liberation based upon Luke 4: 18 (The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free,)\(^7\) which is the foundation of Black Catholic theology.\(^8\)

Sr. Jamie T. Phelps, O.P., offered a course entitled Black Approaches to Theology, which stressed the nature, methods and sources of Black Theology and the reasons justifying its existence and its relationship to other theologies within the Catholic tradition.” In addition, the course, required for all new students, invited the participants to expand and develop an understanding and interpretation of the

\(^6\) Ibid.


\(^8\) IBCS 2015 Summer Program, brochure.
major themes of Catholic systematic theology: God, Christ, Church, and Church Mission as they have meaning and significance for mission and ministry in Black and multi-cultural and inter-cultural Catholic parishes and communities in the United States.9

As mentioned earlier, Sister Jamie is a legendary figure at the IBCS, having been a founding member of the Institute, the Director of the Institute for eight years, and a faculty member at the Institute virtually from its inception. I visited Sister Jamie’s class halfway through the period while the students were examining the 1971 World Synod of Catholic Bishops’ pastoral, Justice in the World.10 Sister Jamie reminded the class that working for justice on all levels of society is constitutive of proclaiming the Gospel. In terms of justice, we are all called to be both actors and recipients with no one group disregarded and no one group arrogantly maintaining a monopoly on gifts and talents.11 Discussion of the remainder of Justice in the World highlighted the Gospel themes of service to the poor; the benefit of suffering; prayer and self-reflection; simple living; and the examination of life-styles in order to establish congruency with the Gospel. Sister Jamie affirmed that we all make a difference regardless of how we perceive our personal contribution.12

9 Ibid.


11 Sister Jamie T. Phelps, O.P., Ph.D. Black Approaches to Theology (class, IBCS, New Orleans, Louisiana, July 14, 2015).

12 Ibid.
Dr. Cecilia A. Moore’s core course, History of Black Catholicism, examined the role played by Black Catholics from the inception of the Church, with special emphasis on their relationship with the Church in the United States. The class focused on the visit of Sister Sylvia Thibodeaux, a member of the Sisters of the Holy Family, which was the order established by Venerable Henriette Delille in New Orleans in 1842. Sister Sylvia was invited to tell the story of her ancestors as well as to describe her life as a Black Catholic female in Louisiana prior to the Civil Rights era and how she became a radicalized religious sister during that period of time.

Sister Sylvia entered the Sisters of the Holy Family sixty years ago and explained that, before Xavier was opened in 1932, the Sisters of Charity administered normal schools for her Order at their Motherhouse as other universities would not accept Black sisters. Loyola University would then issue clandestine diplomas to the graduates of her order. Sister Sylvia studied at Seton Hill University in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, where she experienced learning and living with whites for the first time. She reported that the white sisters were excellent to her and kept her abreast of the Civil Rights movement. Through her knowledge of the movement, Sister Sylvia eventually became radicalized and, by 1968, she was instrumental in the beginnings of the National Black Sisters Conference.

13 IBCS 2015 Summer Program, brochure.
14 Dr. Cecilia A. Moore, History of Black Catholicism (class, IBCS, New Orleans, Louisiana, July 15, 2015).
15 Ibid.
After graduation, Sister Sylvia was assigned to Bishop Kelly School in Tulsa, Oklahoma, which was an ostensibly integrated school (a ratio of eight African Americans to eight hundred white students, in order to receive Title 1 money), administered by the Christian Brothers. Yet, she enjoyed teaching during the JFK/Nixon era and often confronted the prejudices of her students’ parents by introducing literature such as Upon Sinclair’s *The Jungle* or by inviting activists to speak on campus. When Martin Luther King, Jr. was killed, however, Tulsa held joyful celebrations, which caused Sister Sylvia such heartache that she left the school for over a week. When she returned, her students had built a shrine to King in the classroom signifying the effectiveness of Sister Sylvia’s teaching, which renewed her hope in the potential of changing lives.\(^1^6\) We all thoroughly enjoyed Sister Sylvia’s presentation of how her life actualized the experience of racist practices dominating both church and society in her time, while concomitantly inspiring hope.

The Integrative Colloquium, presented by Dr. Modeste Maiu Nyimi, was designed to assist students in the third or fourth summer of study to enter more deeply into the realm of pastoral theology. Students are presented with a way of thinking, reflecting, conversing, and writing about questions and issues that emerge from their ministry and ministerial research. The Colloquium is designed to provide students with structured, interdisciplinary engagement and opportunities for refining research, theological analysis, reflection, and writing. Specifically, the

\(^{1^6}\) Ibid.
colloquium assists students to meet the goal of preparing successful drafts of a major theological research paper and the Practicum proposal.\textsuperscript{17}

Nyimi reviewed the chapter “Method in Emerging Black Catholic Theology,” written by M. Shawn Copeland in \textit{Taking Down Our Harps, Black Catholics in the United States}, edited by Diana L. Hayes and Cyprian Davis.\textsuperscript{18} He traced the origin of the despised Black identity and how this understanding has been transformed into the foundation of Black Catholic theology.\textsuperscript{19} Nyimi agreed with Copeland that Black theology does not repudiate the universal nature and mission of the Church, but it names the Black particularity and the gift and presence within it. To name blackness is critical, commemorative, and celebratory.\textsuperscript{20} He taught that, from its inception, Black theology has been holistic through its concern for the welfare of the whole person; that is, Black spirituality is naturally concerned for the community and the environment. African Americans are innately a prayerful people who believe that all living things are interconnected. African American spirituality, therefore, brings another important element to Catholic Christianity, which is a natural bias against materialism and individualism.

Nyimi continued to trace the evolution of and the features of Black Theology. For Black Catholic theology, there is a need for retrieval of overlooked sources of

\textsuperscript{17} IBCS 2015 Summer Program, brochure.


\textsuperscript{20} Dr. Modeste Malu Nyimi, Integrative Colloquium (class, IBCS, New Orleans, LA, July 16, 2015); Copeland, 122.
Black culture and history and sources of lived Roman Catholic faith. He argued that Black Catholic theology must critically appropriate the African-derived religious-cultural traditions of the enslaved people. Christianity furnished the languages, images, and symbols through which the slaves interpreted their condition and mediated transformed meaning. Therefore, knowledge of history is critical in order to reject repressive meanings and allow for liberation, conversion and the continued flourishing of truly Black and Catholic faith.\(^\text{21}\)

Rev. Dwight Webster’s degree course, The Spirituals, was designed to study a broad range of Black sacred songs. According to the course description, focus was to be placed upon the study of the origins, meanings, and purposes of Black spirituals. Emphasis was also sited on the importance of understanding the foundation of African American culture and Christianity and its influence on Catholic worship, catechesis, and pastoral ministry.\(^\text{22}\)

Webster began the class by posing the question: How did spirituals continue down through the times? He gave the example of how the spiritual, “Woke up this morning with my mind stayed on Jesus,” was revamped by Rev. Osby of Aurora Illinois to “Woke up this morning with my mind stayed on freedom” while he sat in the Hinds County, Mississippi, jail during the freedom rides of the 1960s. Part of the musical battle was the acceptance of spirituals as an art form, surprisingly, even within Black American academic circles. Based on what Gayraud Wilmore

\(^{21}\) Nyimi, Integrative Colloquium; Copeland, “Method in Emerging Black Catholic Theology,” 128.

\(^{22}\) IBCS 2015 Summer Program, brochure.
would call the “deradicalization of the Black Church” in the nineteenth century, Gospel music and the spirituals were not considered among the loftier expressions of Black culture. For example, in 1970, Howard University seniors insisted on having the Gospel Choir sing that at their graduation. The university conceded but only if the Choir was not called the Howard University Choir but, instead, the Howard Choir.24

Webster and Malcolm Speed, a religious arranger and composer who is also a faculty member at the IBCS, discussed how spirituals continue to inform society and culture as well as how society and culture continue to influence spirituals. They explained that blues, jazz, and hip hop are more modern expressions of the spiritual; one example given was Roberta Flack’s “Go Up Moses,” particularly in the lyrics, “you got my people. Let Pharaoh go, just say ‘bye, bye Pharaoh.’25 The verse exhorts Black Americans to quit “begging off” Pharaoh and just let him go, expressing an example of the more contemporary need for psychological freedom as well as a sample of the ubiquitous presence of spirituals. Later in the class, religious musical composer and arranger, Stephen Lee, arrived and explained that all traditions remain alive as long as someone “samples them,” that is, borrows from one tradition and combines it with another.26


24 Dr. Dwight Webster, The Spirituals (class, IBCS, New Orleans, LA, July 17, 2015).

25 Roberta Flack, Joel Dorn and Jesse Jackson, “Go Up Moses” on Quiet Fire, performed by Roberta Flack, produced by Joel Dorn, (Atlantic Records, 1971).

The C & E Track  In this section, my observations of the Certificate and Enrichment track are described in terms of their relevance to the intent of the IBCS to train effective ministers for Black Catholic communities. Although general skills were taught in these three-hour classes, each segment highlighted the Black Catholic experience in a unique manner.

The first course I observed in the C & E track was Jesus: Christ Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, a survey of material concerning Christ from a biblical, theological, and historical perspective giving particular attention to points of interest and debates in our own time especially among people of African descent. The course was taught by Rev. Freddy Washington, C.S. Sp., a Spiritan missionary, who worked among the Masai and Chagga tribes in Tanzania, Africa. 27 Father Washington created one of the most comfortable class environments I have ever experienced; his infectious laugh put the students at ease, which was demonstrated by their high level of participation. Yet, the subject matter was difficult as it centered upon the Christological perspective of Black Catholics, which is a viewpoint forged in the slave experience.

Washington explained that the message of Christ was meant to include those on the edge of society. He argued that no one group envisions Christ the same way. African-American Christians, for example, connect Christ to their past, which began in slavery. From this vantage point, Washington contended that how one comes to

faith is as important as how faith is lived. It is critical to realize both the origin as well as the actuality of our spiritual needs in order to have them met. At that point in the class, Washington reviewed a handout of Seven Core Spiritual Needs: Dignity, Power, Freedom, Meaning, Love, Rest, and Celebration, upon which the Black Catholic adds his or her own essential understanding of Jesus. Black Catholics must understand that Jesus took the form of a slave and humbled himself only to rise on the third day. Likewise, Black Catholics have been raised-up through the experience of slavery.  

Even in the twenty-first century, those who minister to Black Catholics must understand the origin of their tears and struggles.

We reviewed the first chapter of African-American Christianity, Essays in History by Paul E. Johnson, entitled “African-Americans, Exodus and the American Israel.” This article described how early missionary societies found Christianity compatible with slavery. In 1701, the Church of England manuscript, Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, stated that scripture directs... “every man abides in the condition wherein he is called” ... quoting Ephesians 6:5 “Slaves be obedient to your masters.” In this sense, belief in Christ was employed to control rather than to free. Even today, Christ frees only through a personal relationship with him, which is facilitated through our humanness, “baggage” and all. Every person, including ministers, have “baggage,” which Washington defined as “what keeps you up at night.” Ministers must attend to their “baggage” in order to be

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fully human and be able to recognize and attend to the troubles and tears of those they serve.\textsuperscript{30}

Dr. Brian T. Turner’s C & E course, entitled Lead, Follow, Or Get out of the Way: When Leaders Need to Be Led or Checked, is a course where self-care, wellness, counsel, guidance, and reflection are examined in order to unveil methods that ensure leaders are being led and are leading others in healthy ways.\textsuperscript{31} It was clear while visiting Turner’s class that he challenged his students to reach higher levels of personal and social freedom.

During the class that I experienced, Turner described “intellectual maroons”\textsuperscript{32} as those who had escaped from psychological slavery to set up their own independent idea system. He described Black Catholics who have fled the “plantation of Western thought”\textsuperscript{33} and who have restored the integrity of the African intellectual tradition and established sovereign African communities as having engaged in “intellectual disobedience.”\textsuperscript{34} They would be modern-day intellectual maroons who are fleeing from European “conceptual incarceration.”\textsuperscript{35} Turner stressed the importance of Black children studying African world history and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{30}Washington, “Jesus Christ: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow.”
\item \textsuperscript{31}IBCS 2015 Summer Program, brochure.
\item \textsuperscript{32}Jedi Shemsu Jehewty, “Thinking About European Thought” in \textit{Intellectual Warfare} (Chicago: Third World Press, 1999), 52.
\item \textsuperscript{34}Ibid., 8.
\item \textsuperscript{35}Ibid., 5.
\end{itemize}
literature with the goal of creating a paradigm shift from a European-centric to an African-centric model. This *sankofa* teaches that it is correct to reconnect with the African ancestral heritage and its best traditions, cultures, and practices.\(^\text{36}\) He cited the arrested development of American Blacks, which is a reality that has been described in such publications as Carter G. Woodson's *Mis-education of the Negro* and *The Education of the Negro*, and *The White Architect of Black Education* by William Watkins, as well as books written by Amy Garvey and Chaniella Williams. These books not only examine the bias of American education, but challenge the Euro-centric model. Turner presented a large variety of reference material during his class while simultaneously evoking dialogue with the students, several of whom affirmed the dearth of African centered study on any level in the educational system.\(^\text{37}\)

Mr. Malcolm L. Speed’s C & E class entitled Making Melody within Our Hearts (Singing Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs), was meant to encourage the participants to “stir up the hidden Psalmist” within them while gaining some guidance in Psalmody. The course was for musicians, choir directors, and singers who desired a richer understanding of the Word of God in music.\(^\text{38}\) I was present for the last day of Speed’s class when the students presented their psalmodies to the group. Each arrangement was more incredible than the next and Speed expressed

\(^{36}\) Ibid., 11,


\(^{38}\) IBCS 2015 Summer Program, brochure.
his appreciation of the talent in the room; his heartfelt commentary was deeply moving.\footnote{Mr. Malcolm L. Speed, Making Melody within Our Hearts (class, IBCS, New Orleans, LA, July 17, 2015.}

**Extracurricular Offerings** Another important facet of the Institute is the extra-curricular offerings such as Conga drum or liturgical dance instruction. I participated in the Conga drum instruction and wholeheartedly enjoyed the experience. Instruction doubled as practice for the IBCS commencement, which occurred during Mass on July 17, the last Friday evening of the Institute. Graduation night is the *piece de résistance* of the IBCS experience. This year’s celebration was even more exciting as the presider, Bishop Fernand J. Cheri, III, O.F.M., who was ordained four months earlier as the Auxiliary Bishop of New Orleans, was a graduate of the IBCS. In addition to this “first,” the 2015 IBCS commencement was the first time that the new President of Xavier University, Dr. C. Reynold Verret, conferred degrees. Verret had recently taken the helm at Xavier University from Dr. Norman Francis, who had been President for 47 years, the fourth longest term for a President of any institution of higher education in the United States.

The evening began with African liturgical dance enhanced by conga drums. To add to the magnitude of the occasion, four major Gospel choirs gathered to provide spectacularly invigorating music. The traditional “Pomp and
Circumstance” was performed as the IBCS faculty and staff, the interim senior vice president for academic affairs, the president, and the 2015 graduates processed into the chapel.

The 2015 graduates included Rev. Manuel B. Williams, C.R., Rev. Matthew S. O’Donnell, Rev. Loren Adam Deleon, S.J., and Mary Cassandra Will. The celebration of diversity was obvious in that the three priests were Black, white, and Filipino, respectively, and the female graduate was Black. The readings and the Universal Prayer were proclaimed by current students. Bishop Cheri was the homilist and his homily included an account of the obvious inconsistencies in state and regional statements on the status of Black citizens, particularly in light of current racial atrocities. Attacking Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal’s recent statement at the National Right to Life Convention where he boasted leadership of “the most pro-life state in the union,” Bishop Cheri reminded listeners that the incarceration rate among Black males in Louisiana is the highest in the country so that it was deceiving to extol the state as sincerely “pro-life.”

The commencement ceremony immediately followed the Mass and included invigorating remarks by graduate Father Manuel B. Williams, C.R. The commencement speech was given by Dr. Modesto Maul Nyimi, followed by a presentation of the graduates and a conferring of degrees by Dr. Verret. After the diplomas were awarded, the graduates honored the 2016 candidates through a


41 Bishop Fernand J. Cheri, (homily, IBCS Commencement, IBCS, New Orleans, LA, July 17, 2015).
Candle Ritual, which is a symbolic “passing of the torch” to the upcoming graduates. Following the final blessing by Bishop Cheri and the recessional, a reception was held in the Qatar science building.

**Concluding Thoughts** The descriptions of both the degree and C & E courses I observed illustrate the Black Catholic perspective present in each class. The vestiges of a difficult past drive both the understanding and practice of faith today as Black Catholics continue to negotiate the varied forms of racism they encounter. This understanding is critical for the minister who must acquire a particular skill set in order to serve genuinely while demonstrating the hopefulness of the Gospel message. It was obvious that an expertise in Black Catholic ministry was being effectively taught at the IBCS. Students learned the origins and evolution of Black theology, spirituality, and music while studying the practicalities of both preaching and ministering to Black Catholics.

The IBCS summer program is extremely intensive and the degree program is more so than the C & E tract; however, it would be misleading to describe the latter program as at all easy. At the IBCS, the bar is set high for all instructors and students, but it is the spiritual and religious component that both forms and supports the IBCS community, and which provides both the motivation as well as the means for success. In this faith-filled environment, tough questions can be proffered lovingly and answered respectfully. It was obvious that, while the coursework was not diluted, neither was the care and concern among instructors and classmates.
Interviews and Surveys

Student Interviews  While visiting the campus as an observer from July 13-15, 2015, I interviewed eight of the 23 (34.8 %) students in attendance. After distributing surveys to the students, I received ten anonymous survey responses from four degree students and six C & E students (43.5%). These interviews and surveys were anonymous in order to protect students who are still associated with the Institute. The percentage of responses in relation to the total number of students I interviewed in 2015 was approximately 41%. During the 2016 summer session, seventy-five students attended the three-week program and 18 (24%) of the anonymous student surveys were returned. Although participation was not overwhelming, it was substantial considering the intense workload of the students, particularly because their final papers were due during the week of my visit in 2015. In addition, the responses reflected similar attitudes in relation to their experiences at the Institute.

Of the students interviewed, three were degree students, including two Black students and one Filipino student; one Black degree student was female and the three degree students interviewed were between 24 and 40 years of age. Of the five C & E students interviewed, one was white; there were two males and three females, all over the age of 40.

The interview questions asked of students were: 1) Why did you enroll at the IBCS; 2) How do you evaluate your experience; 3) How do you expect to apply your education; 4) Did you experience racism while volunteering or working for the Church; 5) Is there any information you would like to add; and 6) May I contact you
with follow-up questions at a later date? A summary of the student responses follows.

1) Why did you enroll in the IBCS?

The degree students interviewed were working on the completion of an MA degree in Theology, which they desired in order to enhance their ministries. The C & E students interviewed sought to increase their knowledge of Black Catholicism and wished to develop their ministerial skills.

2) How do you evaluate your experience?

The degree students reported an excellent experience and touted the holistic immersion program, cross-cultural formation, the gift of Black Catholicism, and the opportunities for social networking. The C & E students, in general, gave the program an excellent rating. They accentuated the benefits of community life and the networking experiences made possible by attending the IBCS, as well as the value of cross-cultural formation and vibrant liturgical experiences.

3) How do you apply/expect to apply your education?

Two degree students were participating in parish ministry; one was uncertain of how she would apply her degree. The C & E students were generally volunteers in their parishes and wished to apply their knowledge to either faith formation or music ministries.

4) Did you experience racism while volunteering or working for the Church?

Although the Black degree students did not report experiences of overt racism, it was generally thought that the Catholic bishops do not appreciate the faith of the Black Catholic community and, therefore, do not prioritize ministry to this
group. This is demonstrated by the closing of parochial schools in urban areas, the emphasis on contraception rather than health care for millions who need it, the lack of application in regards to bishop’s pastorals on racism, and the lack of funding available for those who wish to attend the IBCS. C & E students commonly reported an experience with overt as well as covert racism and believe that the Catholic Church in America is predominantly a white church. There was a concern expressed about the paucity of African American vocations and the lack of cross-cultural training of African and other priests serving those communities.

5) Is there anything that you would like to add?

All students expressed a profound hope for the future of the IBCS. It was generally expressed that the experience was not only personally transformative, but that it informed, improved, and solidified the Catholic faith in many African American communities.

Student Surveys  Although the survey completed by students was anonymous, they were asked to identify their age, race, sex, and the type of program they were attending at the IBCS. The ages of the participants ranged from 24 years to 72 years old; the largest number of students were between 50 to 60 years old (13 out of 18), with ten students under 50 years of age and five students over 60 years of age. Participants were white (1); Asian (1); Indian (1); Filipino (1); and Black (24); 16 females and 12 males responded. There were 13 degree student responders and 15 C & E student responders. Of the degree responders, ages ranged from 24-72; the average age was 51. There were an even number of male and female
responders; all were Black aside from one responder who was Filipino. Of the C & E responses, ages ranged from 28-59; the average age was 47. Participants were white (1); Asian (1); Indian (1); and Black (11); there was nearly an even number of male and female responders.

The survey questions for the 2015 and 2016 IBCS students were: 1) Why did you decide to enroll in the IBCS? 2) How do you rate your overall experience at the IBCS? 3) What professors influenced you most and why? 4) While at IBCS you have been introduced to the works of specific theologians. Which works impressed you the most? 5) How do you presently apply your IBCS education? 6) What aspects of your education have been the most helpful to you? 7) What are some of the challenges you have faced or are facing in your ministry or employment experiences? 8) In what instances have you experienced ecclesial support? 9) In what instances have you experienced ecclesial racism? 10) What role do you envision IBCS will play in the future, especially considering the current racial environment? 11) Is there any other information, explanation, or general commentary you would like to add? These questions were presented in a multiple-choice format with a space for further commentary. A summary of the student survey responses is as follows:

1) Why did you decide to enroll in the IBCS?

The degree students reported that they enrolled at the IBCS to complete a degree that would assist them in gaining employment in the Church or enhance their skills at their current position. They also expressed a desire for personal
enrichment. The C & E students more often reported a desire for personal enrichment, followed by obtaining ministry skills.

2) How do you rate your overall experience of the IBCS?

The IBCS experience was considered excellent by 21 students, very good by five students, and good by two students. All but one degree student gave the Institute an excellent rating. Common reasons for the favorable ratings included the Afrocentric Catholic curriculum, the faculty, the sense of community, the Institute immersion experience, and the liturgies.

3) What professors influenced you the most and why?

In terms of professors teaching at the IBCS between 2015-2016, degree students most often named Dr. Dwight Webster, Sister Jamie Phelps, and Dr. Modest Malu Nyimi as most influential due to their spiritual, theological, and academic expertise. C & E students most often named Fr. Tony Ricard, Fr. Freddy Washington, and Fr. Manuel Williams for their style of teaching and knowledge of the content. No professor or instructor received a negative rating.

4) While at the IBCS you have been introduced to the works of specific theologians. Which works impressed you the most?

The most impressive theologian named by both degree and C & E students was actually a historian, that is, the late Father Cyprian Davis. The most important work was judged to be *The History of Black Catholics in the United States*, which was written by Davis. The degree students also considered the literary contributions of Sister Jamie Phelps and Dr. James Cone impressive, but no specific work was named.

5) How do you presently apply your IBCS education?

217
Three degree and three C & E students had yet to apply their education in Church settings; the ministries of the other students were diverse. The most popular ministries in which C & E students were engaged were youth and young adult ministry, religious education, and parish or diocesan employment.

6) What aspects of your education have been the most helpful to you?

The most helpful aspect of the IBCS education was the academic component. According to most (25) degree and C & E respondents, the classes were helpful due to the faculty and the content presented. The next most beneficial aspect was the community experience.

7) What are some of the challenges you have faced or are facing in your ministry or employment experiences?

In comparison to the other challenges listed on the survey, the most significant opposition reported was the lack of support from the diocese and the socio-economic status of the community served. Lack of support from the clergy and multiracial realities were also named as considerable difficulties.

8) In what instances have you experienced ecclesial support?

Although lack of support from the diocese and the clergy was frequently listed as a challenge, a narrow majority stated that they received the most support from the clergy and the diocese, along with the worshipping community. Degree students found the worshipping community to be their greatest source of support. Certificate students reported that their greatest source of support was the diocese.

9) In what instances have you experienced ecclesial racism?
Twelve students reported that they were not recipients of racist practices in the Church while 15 reported that they were. One student did not respond. Of the students who did not experience racism in the Church, ten were C & E students. These students were white (1); Asian (1); Indian (1); and Black (7). Four C & E students reported that they experienced covert racism.

Two Black degree students reported that they had not personally experienced racist practices but they believed the Church was racist. Five Black degree students reported experiencing covert and overt racism, while one Black student experienced covert racism only, and two Black students experienced overt racism only.

10) What role do you envision the IBCS will play in the future, especially considering the current racial environment?

Most students felt that the IBCS could play a significant role considering the current racial environment because of its holistic curriculum. They argued that the IBCS is a place where students learn about the structures and constraints of institutional racism while gaining insight into the beauty of the Afrocentric Catholic experience. According to these respondents, understanding the Black Catholic experience produces hope and the self-dignity necessary to combat racism.

Summary of Student Responses  The IBCS student responders from the summer of 2015 and 2016 were a pool of predominantly Black, middle-aged students. There were slightly more female participants than male, and the group was almost equally split between degree and C & E students. Most of the students
found the IBCS experience to be excellent because of the holistic immersion
experience, the sense of community, the social networking, and the liturgies, but
above all, because of the courses offered and the faculty. Most of the students,
particularly the C & E students, applied their education to volunteer church
ministries.

Degree students believed they received more support from their
worshipping communities, while C & E students felt supported by the diocese and
the clergy. Almost as many responders felt supported by the diocese and clergy as
those who felt the hierarchy was their greatest challenge. Experiences of racism
were nearly equal with almost half of the respondents, particularly C & E students,
reporting no experience of racism in the Church. The degree students generally
experienced racism; almost half of the degree students experienced overt and covert
racism. Perhaps this is a result of employment practices in parishes and dioceses as
the three of the four degree students were employed by the Church. The C & E and
degree students envisioned a role for the IBCS in the future particularly because it
provides a holistic curriculum, which not only teaches about racism but also how to
challenge it.

Staff, Faculty, and Alumni Interviews  Face to face, telephone, and transcribed
interviews of staff, faculty, and alumni were also conducted for the purpose of
assessing the value of the IBCS as a resource for those ministering within the Black
Catholic community. Face to face interviews were conducted at the IBCS from July
13-17, 2015. I interviewed four of the five full-time summer staff members and two
faculty members. All of the persons interviewed were Black; there was one male in the group and I did not ask for the ages of the respondents. Five of the six respondents earned either a Ph.D. or Ed.D. These interviews were recorded anonymously to protect all associated with the Institute.

Twenty-seven alumni were contacted by mail and seven responded. The former faculty/staff responders were: Father Joseph A. Brown S.J. (former professor and director) and Dr. Toinette Eugene (founder and former professor). Alumni responders included: Bishop Fernand J. Cheri, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of New Orleans; Bishop Brendan J. Cahill of the Diocese of Victoria, Texas; Orida Edwards, an attorney in Lafayette, Louisiana; Father Richard Myhalyk, S.S.E., Pastor of Saint John the Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama; Ashley Morris, Director of the Office of Intercultural and Ethnic Diversity in the Archdiocese of Atlanta, Georgia; and one former C & E student, Ruth Edwards of New Orleans, Louisiana.

The following pages are a summary of the responses to my interview questions. For each question, the anonymous replies of current staff and faculty were integrated with those of the named responders.

**Interview Question One: What would you consider to be some of the more significant contributions that the IBCS makes in terms of enhancing Black Catholic ecclesial ministry in the United States?**

I created two categories in order to summarize the interviews. The first category summarizes the most common responses concerning the significant contributions that the IBCS makes in terms of enhancing Black Catholic ministry. These responses include the development of Black Catholic consciousness,
leadership skills, ministry skills, as well as cross-cultural training. The second category examines several less frequent responses, which include providing a social network, the academic background necessary for obtaining terminal degrees, and the enculturation of African priests.

**Leadership** The Institute was formed to cultivate, shape, mold, support, and foster leadership in the Black Catholic community in the United States. Bishop Cheri boasted that almost all of his classmates at the IBCS are doing something beyond their own parish ministries, that is, they are engaged in a diocesan or a national Catholic program. He believes that these contributions have made a significant impact upon the entire Church. Cheri recalled leading revivals in parishes and how these talks opened doors for him to do things nationally that he would not have been able to do but for his education at the IBCS.

According to Bishop Brendan Cahill, one of the most significant contributions the IBCS makes to the Church is leadership development within the African American community. He experienced this in Galveston-Houston, and then realized that leaders everywhere could be trained through Xavier for the greater good of Black Catholics.

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42 Interviews with the IBCS faculty and staff with author, July 13-July 17, 2015.


Cross Cultural Ministry  The IBCS is not just a “Black thing,” but enhances the ministry of all, Black or white, who wish to work with Black Catholics. In the early days of the Institute, 60 to 70 percent of the students were white religious sisters and priests who came to learn how to serve Black Catholics. Today, the focus has shifted and the IBCS more typically prepares laity to receive theological and pastoral skills in concert with religious sisters and clergy.45

To Orida Edwards, the greatest contribution of the IBCS is its impact on cross-cultural ministry for Black Catholic parishes. She believes it is critical that those ministers who are assigned to Black Catholic parishes be totally immersed in the culture of the Black Catholic community. The research paper and projects integrated within the degree program are especially helpful, but the entire IBCS curriculum is designed to assist ministry to Black Catholics. White Catholics learn the gifts Black culture brings to the Church and the giftedness of and the differences between themselves and Black Catholics. They have the opportunity to engage, along with Black Catholics, in the poetry, music, and other tangible expressions present in the lives of Black Catholics, along with the academics.46

Toinette Eugene asserts that the enlightenment, education, and formation of so many committed white pastors, members of religious congregations of women and men, pastoral ministers, catechists, and youth ministers who serve in the Black Catholic parishes is an extraordinary contribution in terms of enhancing Black

45 Faculty and staff, interviews.

Catholic ecclesial ministry in the United States. Bishop Cheri concurs that students who attend the IBCS, whether Black or white, are those who are most open to learn about Black Catholicism and apply what they learn for the benefit of the Church. The IBCS is a place where Black and white students teach each other and challenge each other.

Father Joseph Brown argues that the IBCS experience creates a sense of solidarity between Black and white Catholics; the IBCS is a safe place for white ministers to ask questions that will make a difference in their ministry, and, Brown contends, these questions cannot be asked anywhere else. For white persons, the IBCS experience helps white persons learn more about themselves, which, in turn, fosters a deeper level of commitment to ministry. The Institute inspires a desire to minister and has the ability to change hearts and promote service.

Bishop Cahill contends that the IBCS experience works in opposition to racism, which he views as both an internal and external issue for the Church. Anonymous participants added that as a minority on the Xavier University (XULA) campus, white students experience what their non-white colleagues experience daily. Most come to the realization that white Catholics are much more welcome in the Black Catholic world than Black Catholics are in the white. Regardless, the IBCS

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47 Toinette M. Eugene, written response to interview questions with author, September 2016.

48 Cheri, interview.

experience vivifies the Church, wherein participants become excited and return to their parishes armed with the merits of a rich theological and spiritual experience.\textsuperscript{50}

In addition, Orida Edwards argues that the IBCS teaches inclusivity and how to meet people where they are, and this aptitude goes beyond the Black Catholic apostolate and benefits other groups with similar historic experiences in the United States. The curriculum at the IBCS prepares for cross-cultural ministries of many types, not just ministries for Catholics.\textsuperscript{51} Bishop Cahill believes that his experiences at the IBCS will help him in his new assignment, the Diocese of Victoria, Texas, in both his ministry to Black Catholics as well as to immigrants.\textsuperscript{52}

\textit{Ministry Skills} Bishop Cheri lauded the theology he learned at the IBCS along with the preaching and liturgical skills he acquired.

I still use the treasures that I learned regarding Black Catholic history when I am involved in liturgies around the country. You develop a second nature whereas you instinctively incorporate what you have learned. For example, I have written a couple of articles and am a contributing author of \textit{Sweet Spirit} with Father Joseph A. Brown. Today, I am still working on the Archbishop James P. Lyke Liturgical Conference, something I have been doing for ten or eleven years, that is, working on the liturgical planning committees for that conference. My work there directly draws on what I learned at the IBCS. These liturgies incorporate many of the issues we deal with today.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{50} Cahill, interview.

\textsuperscript{51} Edwards, interview.

\textsuperscript{52} Cahill, interview.

\textsuperscript{53} Cheri, interview.
Father Richard Myhalyk praised his professors noting “each of them provided particular threads in the larger overall tapestry of Black culture,” and maintained that the best measure of any evaluation of the IBCS is whether or not the skills learned were later applied in one’s apostolic setting in ministry. Myhalyk used a few examples to illustrate how he employed his education: 1) He was awaiting the publication of Cyprian Davis’ second edition of the History of Black Catholics in the United States to offer his parish a program that would gather interested parishioners and foster appreciation of the history of Black Catholics in the United States; and 2) He frequently looks back on his notes and papers for material to incorporate in homilies and presentations.

*Black Catholic Consciousness*  For Bishop Cheri, the IBCS is the only place that instills what it means to be truly Black and truly Catholic, and the Institute expresses that wisdom for the benefit of the entire Church. He maintains that the IBCS creates conscious advocates of Black Catholicism for the welfare of the Church as well as spokespersons to other denominations. “I can’t believe how much I have impacted the impressions of people on Black Catholics – on how we worship and what we have brought to the table, which makes the Church what it is today. I have surprised people about the role of Black Catholics in scripture, sainthood, musical expression, Gospel and even rap.”

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55 Ibid.
56 Cheri, interview.
Orida Edwards learned that a significant part of Black History was buried in all history and that it needed to be recovered, reclaimed, shared, and preserved. She found the cultural component of the IBCS difficult to describe: “We were able to embrace the wisdom of the ancestors through the ancestral celebration, the MAAFA commemoration, vespers, culture night, morning praise, and noon Mass were significant non-classroom instruction.” Appreciation of one’s culture leads to a sense of pride and often provides the motivation necessary to keep moving forward in the face of racism and socio-economic challenges.

**Social Network** The social network is critical for all involved: the IBCS remains a resource for all like-minded people throughout the United States. The ability to connect with Black Catholics throughout the country provides a network of ministerial support, and assists in the development of relationships. Black Catholics need to know they are not alone; hope is renewed when one connects with a fellow IBCS student or graduate. This is quite unlike the training given in most seminaries. For Black Catholics, the IBCS affords an opportunity to grow in their Black Catholic identity as well as continue to receive guidance and support from Black Catholic mentors.

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57 Edwards, interview.

58 Ibid.

59 Faculty and staff, interviews.
Enculturation of African Priests Many priests and religious from around the world, particularly from Africa, attend the Degree or C & E programs, which serve to enculturate them into the African American experience. This is a critical contribution as there is no other place where international students can effectively gain the skills they need to work with Black Catholics in America.60

Doctoral Degrees Many IBCS graduates continue their education in pursuit of Doctoral degrees, as did Father Nutt, one of the first graduates of the degree program. Dr. Kathleen Dorsey Bellow was a graduate of the degree program; Dr. Vanessa White, Dr. timone davis and Dr. Lauren Moseley all studied at IBCS, as well as Doctoral Candidate, Claudine Pennell Goodlet. Although the IBCS trains those working on the frontlines in parishes, schools, and neighborhoods, it also gives pause to those who may be considering an advanced or terminal degree. The IBCS is a gift for both Black Catholic scholars as well as for pastoral ministers.61

The Experience of the IBCS and Why It Is Effective. Bishop Cahill looks back at his experiences at the IBCS with great admiration. Having gone there six summers, he attests that the academic and intellectual experience was rigorous. “At the same time, you bonded with other students and learned from these relationships. The program was holistic; the social component was very valuable.”62

60 Faculty and staff, interviews.
61 Ibid.
62 Cahill, interview.
Upon enrollment, one alumnus was immediately impressed with the balance of intellectual/academic challenge and community support. She particularly appreciated the adult learning environment and the excellent and demanding African American Catholic faculty. This student expressed that the IBCS provides excellent academic, spiritual, cultural, and social formation for a predominantly volunteer ministry who have few other resources than the Institute.\textsuperscript{63}

Father Myhalyk reported that every class, instructor, event, and liturgy was formative in some way. “We learned by doing and by experiencing. We learned to work together to survive courses. We experienced excellent music and well-celebrated liturgies. We applied what we were learning and experiencing not only during each summer, but, also and more importantly, in our particular apostolic settings after each session.”\textsuperscript{64}

\textit{Faculty}  Much of the effectiveness of the IBCS has been attributed to its excellent faculty. In the early days, students sat at the feet of masters such as Thea Bowman, Bede Abrams, and Cyprian Davis, and current students still have the opportunity to study under the country’s leading theologians. They have the opportunity to converse with giants such as Sister Jamie Phelps, M. Shawn Copeland, Diana Hayes, and Sister Eva Marie Lumas. The IBCS has attracted a wide array of scholars who have brought much to the table and have enriched those who will go

\textsuperscript{63} Faculty and staff, interviews.

\textsuperscript{64} Myhalyk, interview.
back to their dioceses or parishes and improve their ministries. The IBCS faculty is
drawn from Black Catholic scholars throughout the country. They not only provide a
quality program at Xavier University, but also offer quality programs at other
noteworthy institutions. Black scholars write excellent articles and books as well as
offer outstanding talks at national, regional and local events.65

According to Father Joseph Brown, the greatest thing about the early days of
the Institute was the phenomenal faculty. And, fortuitously, this preeminent group
of professors conducted workshops around the country, an effort that Brown found
to be the most successful recruitment endeavor possible. By the time he arrived at
the IBCS in 1991, however, many of the original faculty, such as Bede Abrams, Thea
Bowman, Dolores Harrall, and Nathan Jones, had died and, with them, according to
Brown, so did an exceptional recruitment feeder system. Yet, the Institute continued
to be gifted with many great personalities such as Father Clarence Rivers, who was
practicing liturgical “enculturation” prior to the term becoming popularized in
Church circles.66

For Orida Edwards, the knowledge, wisdom, work ethic, and determination
of the first professor she encountered, Dr. M. Shawn Copeland, took her breath
away. “I secretly thought of her as a walking encyclopedia but as a very, very
compassionate and loving encyclopedia.”67 Edwards also described how Copeland

65 Faculty and staff, interviews.

66 Brown, interview.

67 Edwards, interview.
wanted to make sure each and every student “made it to the finish line.” As Edwards progressed through the program, she learned that all the IBCS professors had the same attitude and a seemingly vested interest that all students met with success. Classes did not just impart “subject matter to be stored in some data bank,” but rather the community life experiences made sure that what was learned could be put into practice. Students had to “walk the talk.”

The IBCS was the only university setting that Edwards experienced where she could recall most of her professors’ names because each one contributed to the classes in such a deep and personal level. She considers the IBCS professors extremely generous with their time and talent and she thanks God for allowing her to encounter them. After Hurricane Katrina, when Edwards and another classmate from Lafayette suffered setbacks and fell behind in their studies, Dr. Cecilia Moore came to their city and assisted them through that critical period. “I couldn’t even imagine a professor giving at that level,” admitted Edwards, “It was like the Institute came to us at a critical time and helped us get back on track for graduation.”

Moore spent a week with them and, according to Edwards, they would never have graduated, especially with so much historical research under their belts, if not for her — “To know Dr. Moore is to love her.”

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68 Ibid.  
69 Ibid.  
70 Ibid.  
71 Edwards, interview.  
72 Ibid.
Recommendations for Attending the IBCS  Bishop Cheri attended the IBCS for seventeen summers because he enjoyed the experience. It was only when he joined the Franciscans that they insisted he earn a degree. When he became a pastor in 1985, he urged his entire staff to become involved in the program. Bishop Cahill recommends the program highly and feels it should be advertised as widely as possible. Some of his favorite courses were Bede Abram’s Introduction to Black Liberation Theology and Father Joseph Brown’s course on the slave narratives. He also loved Morning Praise and all “the beautiful liturgies,” stating that they were all part of the learning.

Father Myhalyk claims that the IBCS augments the ministry formation programs of dioceses, seminaries, and schools of theology. It complements past foundations and provides an opportunity to see ministry, theology, scripture, and ascetics, through a new lens. This is particularly important if you are not Black.

Ashley Morris had a wonderful experience at the IBCS and he cherishes it to this day. He believed that the Morning Prayer and Mass celebrations were extremely helpful in nurturing a communal and individual spiritual health and wellbeing during his time there and he looked forward to the MAAFA. For Orida Edwards,

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73 Cheri, interview.
74 Cahill, interview.
75 Myhalyk, interview.
76 Ashley Morris, written response to interview questions with author, September 2016.
the IBCS experience was life changing and she immediately learned the value of community because she instantaneously became part of another family.77

Summary of the Most Significant Contributions the IBCS Makes in Terms of Enhancing Black Catholic Ecclesial Ministry in the United States. The responses to this question support the impact of the IBCS on Black Catholic ecclesial ministry in the United States in terms of fostering Black consciousness, leadership, ministry skill development, and cross-cultural leadership development. This is accomplished through the holistic, immersion experience at the Institute, which focuses upon scholarship and praxis through the efforts of an outstanding faculty. Black Catholic identity is augmented through this process, which is bolstered by mentorship and networking both during and after the sessions. The IBCS programs have provided the foundation and impetus for students in pursuit of terminal degrees. The Institute is an important resource for the enculturation of African clergy as well as a nexus for the augmentation of ministry formation programs for dioceses, seminaries, and schools of theology. Through a sense of solidarity with white participants leading to conversion of heart, the Institute inherently works in opposition to racism.

Interview Question Two: What are some of the challenges experienced by Black Catholic ecclesial ministers and how can the IBCS assist students who will encounter these challenges?

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77 Edwards, interview.
The Challenge of Racism  Outside of particular urban hubs, Black Catholics are often ostracized, ignored, and generally rendered invisible, by white clergy and lay people. There is a perception that there are not many Black Catholics; even in Philadelphia where there are three extremely vibrant Black parishes, one staff member asserted that most white folk do not know they are there. There are layers of exclusion, invisibility, and marginalization, which foster the development of a parallel church. There is no sense of mutuality or equality. When Black Catholics appear at the Cathedral, most white folks think they are Baptists.\textsuperscript{78}

According to Orida Edwards, the fact that Black Catholics are such a small segment of the Catholic population and have been omitted from written and published Catholic history, means that they feel invisible and voiceless. In order to respond to the needs of Black Catholics, the Church must first acknowledge and recognize these needs. Through his research and writing, the late Father Cyprian Davis, one of the pillars of the IBCS, in essence wrote Black Catholic history into Catholic history. For years, Black Catholic history was simply omitted from textbooks and was, therefore, primarily an oral history. Edwards insists that there is a great need to preserve this history and the IBCS assists those students who want to participate in the process of recovering, reclaiming, and preserving the precious nuggets that comprise Black Catholic History.\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{78} Faculty and staff, interviews.

\textsuperscript{79} Edwards, interview.
According to Bishop Cheri, Black Catholics are not respected as part of the Roman Catholic Church and they are still looked at as “outreach.”

We have to know who we are and whose we are; we are part of the family and need to be recognized as such. We need to break down barriers and be seen as people at the table. So, it is beyond issues of racism; it is about changing the mindset of people and calling them to realize the values and gifts Black Catholics bring to the table. The IBCS makes you a conscious advocate of Black Catholicism and a spokesman to other church denominations.\textsuperscript{80}

Bishop Cahill believes that racism within society affects the Church. The Church would benefit from more African American bishops as well as more African American priests and religious. Cahill maintains, however, that “racist attitudes have affected our vocation work as far as recruiting priests, brothers, sisters, etc.”\textsuperscript{81} According to Cahill, the stellar reputation of the IBCS allows those associated with the Institute the credibility to promote a genuine dialogue in order to understand the ways in which the Church is consciously or unconsciously discouraging African American vocations and, then, what could be done by the Church to increase them.\textsuperscript{82}

\textit{How the IBCS Can Challenge Racism} The IBCS can help students build networks of support to work against feelings of invisibility and marginalization in order to build a sense of solidarity with the national Black community. Relationships are made at the IBCS that far transcend the three weeks spent as a community. In

\textsuperscript{80} Cheri, interview.

\textsuperscript{81} Cahill, interview.

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
addition, it was suggested that the IBCS continue to engage students about the most important current issues such as Black incarceration rates, lack of health care, lack of jobs, and violence. One student remarked that people are dying every day in New Orleans and asked, “Can IBCS do anything about that?” Even though the IBCS cannot be all things to all people, it needs to intensify its attention to social issues and push for social change. The practicum aspect of the thesis helps in this regard, as do certain symposiums such as the *Summit on Violence*.  

Edwards asserted that the IBCS program embraces diversity and promotes cultural competency. “The first semester I was in class we learned the definition of theology as “faith seeking understanding” so in this very process bridges are gapped in communities.” Eugene asserts that the lessons learned at the IBCS have an impact on all communities, especially those historically subjected to racism, marginalization, and discrimination.

*The Challenge of the American Hierarchy*   For Father Brown, one significant challenge is that there is no national effort on the part of the bishops to promote the IBCS and, therefore, the training of culturally competent ministers within the Black Catholic Church does not have the same priority as training those serving the Hispanic Community. Additionally, there is no requirement for ministers in Black

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83 Faculty and staff, interviews.

84 Ibid.

85 Edwards, interview.

86 Eugene, interview.
Catholic communities to be trained; in fact, Brown claims that even the Josephites and Jesuits did not take advantage of the Institute when they opened schools in Black communities. If bishops and superiors do not send seminarians and young priests to the IBCS, they will not receive the skills they need. Brown argues that this includes Black seminarians and priests; Black theology is “not just in our DNA; it has to be learned.” Brown also insists that all ministers coming from Africa should attend the Institute for at least three years in order to understand Black American Catholic communities.

According to several students and staff members, the lack of concern on the part of the bishops is a reflection of the fact that they generally do not appreciate the faith of the Black Catholic community. Rather than extending a sense of cordiality and empowerment to lay leaders, bishops and pastors do not always appreciate the new skills ministers acquire at the IBCS. In addition, the bishops have been closing urban schools, which are arguably sources of evangelization for the 60 to 80 percent of the non-Catholic, often Black students who attend parochial schools.

**Working with the Hierarchy** According to Cahill, “The IBCS is organized, credible, and authoritative -- when the Institute speaks, people listen. Thea Bowman, who was one of the Institute’s earliest treasures, was able to influence the

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87 Brown, interview.

88 Ibid.

89 Faculty and staff, interviews.
USCCB; when she spoke to the Bishops, she was so strong and well-respected that her words were effective.”  

It was also suggested that the IBCS collaborate with receptive bishops to recruit and sponsor potential candidates for ministry. The IBCS could collaborate with seminaries, dioceses, and universities to provide cross-cultural learning experiences for those in formation. In the meantime, students need to remain steadfast to the vision, knowledge, and skills they gained at the IBCS.

The Challenge of Ministry to Latin American Catholics Versus Black Catholics

Today, Black Catholics are pitted against Latin Americans and, because of their numbers within the Church, it has become a priority to learn the Spanish language and Latino culture. Latin Americans certainly deserve ministry, but not at the expense or neglect of Black Catholics. There is a fear that the horrors of the past will be repeated by relegating Black Catholics to second class citizenship instead of recognizing that their needs and cause for evangelization are important.

Safeguarding the IBCS Experience

The IBCS must continue to offer students first-rate pastoral theology and ministry learning, however, with the current interest in multicultural education, Black Catholic instructors are being heavily recruited away from traditionally Black universities and colleges to other Black institutions.

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90 Cahill, interview.

91 Faculty and staff, interviews.

92 Ibid.
studies programs. The integrity of the IBCS immersion experience must be
safeguarded in an age of practicality and a utilitarianism that devalues the cultural,
spiritual, and social aspects of the IBCS program. At the same time, practical
strategies are needed to help build up communities.\footnote{Ibid.}

\textit{Challenges to Black Ecclesial Ministry}  Ashley Morris names as challenges to
Black Catholic ecclesial ministers: 1) The lack of access to resources; 2) Continuous
operation in silos of isolation; 3) Lack of a network of communication; 4) Lack of
resources specific to the continuing education and training of ministers; and 5)
Continued struggles with the engagement and involvement of high school youth and
young adults in the life of the Church beyond Confirmation, lecturing, and
ushering.\footnote{Morris, interview.}

In addition, Black Catholic ecclesial ministers, ordained or lay, are stretched
thin. There is an elderly Black core, but a great need for younger people. The elders
ask, “Where are they?” but when they do come forward, there is a feeling among the
elders that they should earn their way, “cut their teeth” so to speak. A tension exists
between young and old.\footnote{Faculty and staff, interviews.} Black ecclesial ministers often struggle to practice the
ministry for which they have trained; there is little appreciation for cultural

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\footnote{Ibid.}

\footnote{Morris, interview.}

\footnote{Faculty and staff, interviews.}
competency and trained ministers are judged to be too progressive, oppositional, or anti-clergy for parish work.96

Forging the IBCS Identity  Toinette Eugene asserted that the IBCS must instill a sense of esprit de corps and make certain students know that they are invaluable and irreplaceable members of the pastoral staffs who employ them, and enable them to serve and lead in their faith communities. In our contemporary parlance, students and graduates must have a strong sense that being a part of the heritage and lineage of IBCS “really matters.”97 Many Black Catholic ecclesial ministers are discouraged because they are made to feel inadequate, overshadowed, or even overpowered by their white peers.

Forging a distinctive IBCS professional identity can make a difference; this “great cloud of IBCS witnesses”98 should know they are never really alone, without resources, without colleagues and mentors who can provide support, solidarity, and strength in ministry. The IBCS can assist students who will encounter challenges by instilling in them the idea that they are an integral part of a national network of lay and ordained Black Catholic ecclesial ministers. In addition, the IBCS could consider courses or practicums that develop confidence and competence in conflict

96 Ibid.

97 Eugene, interview.

98 Ibid.
resolution, community organizing, crisis management, and domestic violence that are often so necessary.\textsuperscript{99}

Morris sees the IBCS as already addressing the challenges faced by Black ecclesial ministers particularly through the regular seminars/presentations held with guest speakers and the diversification of the courses and content offered through the program. He thinks it would be helpful to compile a contact list of students with their professional information and disseminate it. The IBCS could also offer courses on the use of social media in evangelization to Black communities, workshops on developing discipleship and stewardship among parishioners in Black communities, and perhaps a “best practices” sharing session between former and current students in the program.\textsuperscript{100}

\textit{The Challenge of Finding and Maintaining Employment} One of the challenges faced by trained ecclesial ministers is to find employment either because a parish closes or an IBCS education is considered a “black bag” and not Roman Catholic. Ministers in Black communities generally have a fragile employment status and an inability to gain the money or time for study. Often they wait until later in life to study and must then adjust to academia and technology. Issues of racism and sexism often persist.\textsuperscript{101}

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{100} Morris, interview.

\textsuperscript{101} Faculty and staff, interviews.
The IBCS Network  Through the IBCS, students are encouraged to call their advisors for assistance as well as to help each other find positions. This is a collective work and responsibility; that is, the IBCS is a place where people help each other meet challenges.

The Challenge of Being a White Priest in a Black Parish  Father Myhalyk reported that his greatest challenge is that he is a white priest. “Although I am very much sensitive to Black ministry as a result of the IBCS, it is very clear that Black folks still prefer a Black priest. The IBCS helped me and other white priests to be more effective BUT it doesn’t change the reality that an IBCS Black graduate will probably be more effective in ministry.”102

The Challenge of Attracting Youth  Ashley Morris reported struggles with the engagement and involvement of high school youth and young adults in the life of the Church beyond Confirmation, lecturing, and ushering.103 Ruth Kennedy believes that the youth are getting involved with churches that promote joyous praise and singing. Hence, it is very important that people come to the IBCS and learn that celebratory music and worship should be integral to the Catholic Church as well.104

102 Myhalyk, interview.

103 Morris, interview.

Summary of the Challenges Experienced by Black Catholic Ecclesial Ministers and how the IBCS can Assist Students Who Will Encounter These Challenges

The primary challenge for Black Catholic ecclesial ministers that surfaced throughout the interviews is racism, followed closely by a lack of attention from the hierarchy of the American Church. Although racism is listed as a separate category, it appeared to be a fundamental factor that exacerbated all other challenges experienced by Black Catholic ecclesial ministers. It could be argued that the lack of priority given to the Black Catholic community, particularly in the area of evangelization, is based upon racist practices. The USCCB could, instead, choose to utilize the IBCS to its full advantage by mandating that Black and white priests and seminarians who serve that community enroll in an IBCS program. The USCCB could additionally promote advertisement of the Institute for lay people who work in Black Catholic communities.

The interviews suggest that the bishops need to: 1) Encourage Black vocations; 2) Scrutinize their focus on Hispanic communities at the expense of the Black Catholic community and; 3) Reconsider closing parishes that serve Black Catholics as this not only alienates the community but eliminates Black Catholic ministerial positions; 4) Bishops and pastors should re-examine their attitudes toward those who have earned a degree or certificate at the IBCS and support evangelical efforts among Black youth. In sum, the current relationship between the hierarchy and Black Catholics demonstrates the existence of structural racism. There appears to be no urgency for prioritizing excellence in ministry for or by Black Catholics.
Conclusions

When I began to study the IBCS, I was interested in two questions. The first set of questions concerned the role of the IBCS in preparing people to minister to Black Catholics. The second set of questions considered whether Black Catholic religious and cultural traditions, as taught at the IBCS, benefited the American Catholic Church. The responses of those surveyed and interviewed, as well as my own personal observations indicate that the IBCS does indeed effectively prepare those individuals who minister to Black Catholics, and that Black Catholic religious and cultural traditions, as taught at the IBCS, benefit the entire American Catholic Church. I have combined the answers to these two questions because I contend that the findings are associated.

My first experience during the IBCS summer session of 2015 was Morning Praise, the first of several sacramental and para-liturgical events that I witnessed during my visit. All of these celebrations demonstrated Black Catholic worship, including music and preaching, as well as a unique Afrocentric liturgical environment. Students benefitted from an exposure to this tradition, because they can choose to replicate these experiences in parishes and dioceses throughout the nation. This knowledge assists not only those who work in Black or multi-racial parishes, but those who could employ aspects of the joyous Black Catholic liturgical traditions in other ecclesial milieus. Liturgies in white parishes, for example, could be energized by the infusion of some aspects of Black Catholic worship, such as more participatory homiletic approaches or more exuberant music.
Many of the classes contributed to the enhancement of Black Catholic ministerial skills. Father Maurice Nutt’s class, Black Preaching I, taught effective Black Catholic preaching skills. Students practiced their skills in class as well as during liturgical celebrations. A white priest, Father Matthew O’Donnell, demonstrated Black Catholic preaching skills at a noon Mass during my visit; his competency in this area will be valuable when he returns to his Black Catholic parish in Chicago. Black Catholic homiletic skills, such as repetition, response, and cadence alteration, could also be employed to some degree in any worship setting, as well as in educational environments.

Rev. Dwight Webster’s course, The Spirituals, as well as Malcolm Speed’s course on psalmody, taught Black Catholic musical skills that could be directly applied to parish liturgies. An understanding of the origins of Black spirituals contributes to the understanding of the Black Catholic experience of slavery, which was endured through an absolute confidence in the benevolence of God. All Catholics could benefit from the soulful response to brutality inherent in Black Catholic musical expression, as well as the example of unmitigated trust in God.

The Certificate and Enrichment Track was designed to provide ministry skills to those who specifically serve in Black Catholic parishes, yet aspects of these courses help raise a general awareness of the Black experience, as well as emphasizing the significance of self-knowledge for effective ministry. Rev. Freddy

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105 Nutt, Black Preaching I.
106 Ibid.
107 Webster, The Spirituals.
Washington’s course on Jesus explored a Black Catholic understanding of God; however, it also explored the psychological challenges encountered by Black Catholic ministers, and their congregations, due to the vestiges of slavery. Washington advocated both an understanding and an employment of the Seven Core Spiritual Needs of Black Catholics in order that the students become more effective ministers.¹⁰⁸ An appreciation of these primary necessities: Dignity, Power, Freedom, Meaning, Love, Rest, and Celebration, along with one’s cultural perception of Jesus, could benefit all ministers, as well as all congregants.

Dr. Brian Turner’s course on Black Catholic leadership investigated the need to escape from the psychological slavery of Western thought and appreciate the rich cultural history of African Americans and Africans. Both courses aimed to raise Black consciousness for all participants, as well as to assist them confronting the psychological struggles inherent in Black Catholic ministry. The courses additionally emphasized the significance of self-knowledge and the importance of discovering personal bias when attempting to successfully serve others.¹⁰⁹

The student surveys and interviews, for both degree and C & E students, indicate that respondents’ overall experience while attending the IBCS can be described as excellent. In terms of providing ministry skills for those who work in Black Catholic communities, this result is significant, particularly because the degree students are generally preparing academically to enhance their ministries, and the C


¹⁰⁹ Turner, Lead, Follow, or Get Out of the Way.
& E students are learning particular ministry skills in catechesis, leadership, or youth ministry. Because the IBCS has been educating an average of approximately 94 students per year since its inception 37 years ago, I argue that the Institute has been and is enhancing the ministry skills of those who serve the Black Catholic community. The history of the Institute’s administrative development, however, indicates that the IBCS has been perennially in need of further advertisement and recruitment in order to increase the student base and extend its educational mission.

The staff, faculty, and alumni of the IBCS view the Institute as an effective educational center for those who minister to Black Catholics and that the Black Catholic religious and cultural traditions, as taught at the IBCS, benefit the entire American Catholic Church. Without specifically separating my interview questions into these categories, responses surfaced that definitively supported this argument.

In response to my question concerning the significant contributions that the IBCS makes in terms of improving Black Catholic ecclesial ministry in the U.S., the most common responses from the staff, faculty, and alumni group were a belief that the IBCS experience enhances Black Catholic consciousness, leadership skills, ministry skills, and cross-cultural training. For example, alumnus Orida Edwards expressed the idea that the IBCS facilitated total immersion in Black Catholic culture for the benefit of those ministering to Black Catholics, with an additional benefit being that white Catholic ministers were able to learn the gifts Black culture bring to the Church.110 Bishop Fernand Cheri contended that students who attend the IBCS,

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110 Edwards, interview.
whether Black or white, are those who are most open to learn about Black Catholicism and apply what they learn for the benefit of the Church.\textsuperscript{111} Father Joseph Brown argued that all ministers learn more about themselves at the IBCS, which contributes to a deeper level of ministry commitment and promotes service to the Church.\textsuperscript{112}

A third question, which surfaced as I engaged in my research, was: Does the IBCS contribute to racial justice and racial reconciliation in the Church? The preliminary IBCS proposal called for an institute that “would develop innovative ministries in the Black community that were to be comprehensive enough to incorporate Black culture, foster Black culture, and foster Black liberation contributing to spiritual rebirth, human survival, and economic, political, and social development of Blacks in America.”\textsuperscript{113} Black liberation theology, which advocates racial justice, was initially addressed implicitly through courses designed to educate those who wished to serve in Black Catholic communities.

It was not until the directorship of Sister Jamie Phelps that the Institute’s approach to racism and racial justice became more intentional. As Associate Director of the Degree program, Sister Jamie called for a more critical approach to the notion of “Blackness” and race.\textsuperscript{114} In 2006, as Director of the

\textsuperscript{111} Cheri, interview.

\textsuperscript{112} Brown, interview.

\textsuperscript{113} Benz et.al., 2-3.

\textsuperscript{114} Phelps, IBCS Degree Student Advisement Night, July 16, 1996.
Institute, she wrote about a new, more insidious racism that characterized the country since the Civil Rights Movement. She argued that covert racism and white privilege contributed to the vicious corollaries of poverty: poor education, unemployment, poor housing, violence, and loss of hope. Sister Jamie outlined the future role of the IBCS as an institute that would need to address these issues in order to educate effective ministers for the Black Catholic community.¹¹⁵

The current IBCS curriculum has continued to address racial justice in a more explicit manner. Several of the classes I observed supported my contention that the IBCS curriculum contributes to racial justice and racial reconciliation in the U.S. Church. Sister Jamie Phelps’ class, entitled Black Approaches to Theology, explored the World Synod of Bishop’s pastoral, *Justice in the World*, and Sister Jamie reminded the class that working for justice on all levels of society is constitutive of proclaiming the Gospel.¹¹⁶ Dr. Cecilia Moore’s class, History of Black Catholicism, was comprised of an interview with Sister Sylvia Thibodeaux, whose life story illuminated her journey to radicalization and a personal search for racial justice.¹¹⁷ Dr. Modeste Malu Nyimi’s course, Integrative Colloquium, accentuated the need to understand history in order to reject repressive meanings of Black identity and allow for liberation, conversion, and the flourishing of truly Black and Catholic

¹¹⁵ To IBCS Students, Faculty and Administrators from Phelps, June 22, 2005.

¹¹⁶ Phelps, Black Approaches to Theology.

¹¹⁷ Moore, History of Black Catholicism.
faith. Dr. Dwight Webster’s class explored the liberative aspects of Black spirituals and how they continue to inform society and culture.

In the C & E track, Rev. Freddy Washington’s course discussed the enduring historic and psychological effects of slavery and the means to confront these influences in ministry. Dr. Brian Turner’s class on leadership advocated challenging the Euro-centric model of education and the importance of studying African world history. It was clear to me that the courses at the IBCS, which I experienced during my visit, addressed the injustices inherent in the Black Catholic experience and sought to provide elements of redress, through Catholic social teaching, historical knowledge, theological methodology, as well as psychological liberation.

Although I did not ask current students specific questions about racial injustice and racial reconciliation, the responses of staff, faculty, and alumni supported my contention that the IBCS promotes racial justice. Students who worked for the Church did report experiencing more racism in their work environment in comparison to those students who volunteered in Church ministries. Racism, therefore, was experienced in some degree by Black students; this presupposes a need for racial justice. It was also expressed by the students that

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118 Nyimi, Integrative Colloquium.
119 Webster, The Spirituals.
120 Washington, Jesus Christ: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow.
121 Turner, Lead, Follow, or Get Out of the Way.
122 Student Surveys, Summers of 2015- 2016.
the IBCS plays a significant role in confronting racism because of its holistic curriculum; the IBCS is a place where one can learn about the structures and constraints of institutional racism while gaining insight into the beauty of the Afrocentric experience. Students concurred that understanding the Black Catholic experience produces hope and instills the self-dignity necessary to combat racism.\textsuperscript{123}

It was clear from the responses to my faculty, staff, and alumni interviews that the IBCS promotes racial justice and racial reconciliation. Father Joseph Brown argued that the IBCS experience creates a sense of solidarity between Black and white Catholics.\textsuperscript{124} Alumnus Bishop Brendan Cahill contended that the Institute experience works in opposition to racism within and outside of the Church.\textsuperscript{125} Alumnus Orida Edwards noted that the Institute taught Black Catholic cultural pride, which provides the motivation to move forward in the face of racism.\textsuperscript{126} Bishop Fernand Cheri claimed that Black Catholics are not respected as part of the U.S. Church and are still looked upon as outreach; however, the IBCS calls all to realize the values and gifts Black Catholic bring to the table.\textsuperscript{127}

It was acknowledged that the IBCS can challenge racism by developing networks of support and solidarity with the national Black Catholic community.

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{124} Brown, interview.
\textsuperscript{125} Cahill, interview.
\textsuperscript{126} Edwards, interview.
\textsuperscript{127} Cheri, interview.
Some respondents suggested that the IBCS continue to engage students about important current issues such as Black incarceration rates, lack of health care, unemployment, and violence.\textsuperscript{128} This recommendation supports the contention that the IBCS curriculum has evolved in its understanding of racist structures and the need for racial justice. With a foundation of racial justice education already in place, the IBCS is poised to strengthen its position as a center for racial justice and racial reconciliation within the Church. The Institute’s recent affiliation with the Black Lives Matter movement may provide the context for such an expanded role.

My visit to the IBCS, along with the opportunity to survey and interview administrators, faculty, alumni, and current students, has demonstrated to me the excellence of the IBCS program. The IBCS three-week immersion model strengthens the holistic curriculum consisting of courses taught by dedicated faculty members along with vibrant liturgical and cultural experiences. The opportunity for mentoring and social networking further augments the education provided by the Institute. It is apparent that over the past 36 years, many Black and white ministers have gained academic degrees, ministry skills, and personal enrichment as a result of their IBCS education. This reality supports the claim that the IBCS has made a positive impact on ministry development for the Black Catholic community as well as raised Black Catholic consciousness among white and Black IBCS students.

Bishop Cheri has claimed that "The IBCS is a sleeping giant right in our backyard and we don’t take advantage of it."\textsuperscript{129} It is clear that the Institute is held in

\textsuperscript{128} Faculty and Staff, interviews.

\textsuperscript{129} Cheri, interview.
high esteem by staff, faculty, and alumni, as well as by current students; only positive comments were made regarding the holistic experience, the level of scholarship, and the skills imparted at the Institute. In turn, the education one receives at the IBCS has proven to be both applicable and beneficial in ministerial settings for both Black and white ministers and, as such, is considered by graduates as an effective deterrent of racism. Knowledge of the rich history of Black Catholicism raises consciousness, promotes conversion, and develops ministerial confidence. Connections formed through the Institute have transformed into enduring relationships, which have given hope to those who struggle in the face of clerical, economic, and racial challenges.

In terms of its effect on the American Catholic Church, however, the IBCS has a long road to follow. Racism and the lack of prioritization on the part of the USCCB, has deprived the Institute of the potential to reach larger segments of the Black Catholic community. White and Black priests, deacons, and laity working with Black communities are not mandated to attend the IBCS, which is arguably the best resource for their particular assignment. Seminarians, who could potentially work in Black parishes, as well as African priests, are not expected to acquire the skills necessary for their ministry through such a holistic program as offered at the Institute. If this situation were to change in favor of an IBCS education, it would stand to reason that ministry to Black Catholics would be enhanced nationally, Black vocations would increase, and Black Catholicism would not only be a distinguishable facet of the American Church, but be recognized as a gift to the national Church. The bishops need to support the IBCS, not only for the Institute to survive and thrive, but
also for the Church to eradicate structural racism, a situation that extinguishes her moral authority. Now, more than ever, the Church needs to promote the IBCS and protect the unparalleled gift of Black Catholicism.
Chapter Six
The Future Impact of the IBCS

The IBCS was created to form effective ministers for the Black Catholic community, not to combat racism within or outside of the Church. The reality of racism, however, is an inherent, pervasive dimension of the Black experience and, therefore, must be recognized as an intrinsic feature of Black Catholic life. African-American activist, James Lee Bogg’s defined racism as Systematized oppression of one race by another. In other words, the various forms of oppression within every sphere of social relations, economic exploitation, military subjugation, political subordination, cultural devaluation, psychological violation, sexual degradation, verbal abuse, etc. together make up a whole of interacting and developing processes which operate so normally and naturally and are so much a part of the existing institutions of society that the individuals involved are barely conscious of their operation.¹

As a result of this ethos, the IBCS programs are inextricably woven within the context of an ecclesial and secular racist environment, while positing hope for ultimate racial reconciliation and solidarity.

At present, racial discontent has escalated to its highest point since the riots incited by the 1992 acquittal of the Los Angeles police officers charged in the beating of Rodney King.² Considering the volatile context of current racial relations, particularly considering disturbing interactions between white police officers and

Black Americans, this concluding chapter seeks to examine the present and potential role of the IBCS as an agent of racial reconciliation both within and outside of the American Catholic Church.

This chapter begins with a brief description of the current racial environment as revealed by police involved shootings, along with some examples of the Catholic response, including that of the episcopacy. I argue that the IBCS consistently works toward racial reconciliation, as demonstrated by its holistic curriculum, underscored by the theological and ethical insights of M. Shawn Copeland and Bryan N. Massingale. By virtue of its continual promotion of racial justice, hope, and peace, particularly through its recent relationship with the Black Lives Matter movement, I propose that the IBCS is poised to perform a distinctive role by witnessing to what could be achieved nationally when education aligns with action in the name of justice.

*Police Involved Shootings and the Church’s Response*

During the past several years, police involved shootings of African Americans have captivated the attention of the American public. Police killed at least 102 unarmed Black people in 2015, and in only ten of these cases were police charged with a crime. Two of these deaths resulted in convictions of officers involved.³

Among some of the more notorious cases were the deaths of Eric Garner (Staten Island, New York on July 17, 2014), Michael Brown (Ferguson, Missouri on August 9, 2014), and Freddie Gray (Baltimore, Maryland on April 12, 2015) and, more recently, the deaths of Alton Sterling (Baton Rouge, Louisiana on July 5, 2016) and Philando Castile (Falcon Heights, Minnesota on July 6, 2016).\footnote{“Timeline: Recent US Police Shootings of Black Suspects,” (April 7, 2015), www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-09-timeline-police-shootings (accessed October 22, 2016).} Indictments were not issued for the police officers involved in the shooting of Garner or Brown; the police officers who shot Sterling and Castile were placed on administrative leave, awaiting trial; and all six police officers involved in the Freddy Gray case were acquitted.\footnote{Haeyoun Park and Jasmine C. Lee, “Looking for Accountability in Police-Involved Deaths of Blacks,” \textit{The New York Times} (November 16, 2016) https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/07/12/us/looking-for-accountability-in-police-involved-deaths-of-blacks.html (accessed April 13, 2017). Clearly, all instances in which a white officer shoots an African American male are not marked by ambiguities; Antonio Martin (White Berkley, Missouri on December 23, 2014) for instance, pulled a gun on an officer and was subsequently killed.}

While clearly there are ambiguities in many of these cases, the incidence of unnecessary shooting of Black men by white police, however, cannot be refuted. Protests throughout the country attest to the reality of exceptionally high tensions between Black persons and law enforcement agencies and those who support both groups. The rapid dissemination of graphic images of events through television news and social media electrify communities leading to national reactions, which include oversimplification, exaggeration, error and rage, but which also shine a
bright light on disturbing social realities. The IBCS curriculum, in collaboration with the Black Lives Matter Movement through the symposium model, offers a conciliatory direction for otherwise destructive reactions and has the potential to serve as a model of solidarity for the American Catholic Church.

As with most racially charged issues, opinions vary regarding the source and practice of this “hot-button” issue. Some emphasize data indicating that Blacks commit a proportionately larger percentage of urban crimes than do whites, and that Blacks are more likely to kill police officers than be killed by police officers. Statistics are offered concluding that Blacks killed by police were either armed or threatened the police officer with potentially lethal force. It has also been claimed that although unarmed Black men more often die from police gunfire than unarmed white men, the reality is that the Black person tried to disarm the officer, or otherwise assault him. Asserting the need for more “law and order,” the circumstances that sustain the violence that exists in poor Black neighborhoods due to the vestiges of slavery, Jim Crow, and pervasive racism, are ignored.

On the other hand, there are those who acknowledge the extent of racism in this country and understand the need to transform societal structures that perpetuate inequalities between white and Black citizens. They remind us that

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8 Jaycox, “Bishops Call for Peace Amid Racism Is Obscure, Counterproductive.”
although the majority of our law enforcement officials are fair-minded servants of the citizenry who risk their lives daily and, therefore, deserve respect and praise, the incidence of police killing unarmed Black men has been alarming. Significantly, 57 percent of African American police believe that Black offenders are treated with far less respect by white officers than white offenders are accorded; only 5 percent of white officers believe that this is true. The idea that the Black community is “dangerous and violent” has been ingrained in society, therefore, Black people are considered a “culturally other” to be feared and watched by the dominant white population. Given this generalization, police are often granted the benefit of the doubt even when their abusive behavior is captured on video.

The Catholic Church Response to Recent Police Shootings

_Some Positive Steps_  For the World Day of Peace on January 1, 2015, Bishop Edward L. Braxton, Bishop of Belleville, Illinois, presented his pastoral letter, “The Racial Divide in the United States: A Reflection for the World Day of Peace in 2015.” The text was published with a study guide so that parishes, schools, and other groups could gather for serious discussion on the complex national racial divide. The pastoral concluded with 14 suggestions for individuals and groups to “Pray, Listen, Learn, Think, and Act,” when examining the sin of racism.

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10 Ibid. 8
Braxton argued that Catholics, like other Americans, have reacted in a variety of ways to the recent wave of shooting deaths, court decisions, and protests. Because Black Catholics remain a small percentage of the total Catholic population (three million within a total population of 67.7 million people)\textsuperscript{11} many white Catholics do not come in contact with Black Catholics. The reactions of white Catholics have been similar to those of Americans at large, ranging from no concern to profound distress; from feelings of anger and frustration about African Americans to the realization that there is a systemic racial prejudice in American society that is morally wrong. Black Catholics, obviously, are directly affected by racial violence as well as racism in general. Some Catholics, both Black and white, have gone to the streets to take part in the mass nationwide peaceful protests while condemning acts of vandalism.\textsuperscript{12} In a December 2016, essay entitled “Let’s Be a Church Where Black Lives Matter: Let Us Pray for the Strength to Confront Racism in the United States,” Bryan Massingale argued that white Christians are among the least likely to believe racism is a systemic problem. Seventy percent of white Christians believe that the deaths of Black people are isolated issues with no connection to one another, while 71 percent of Catholics hold this view.\textsuperscript{13}

On the World Day of Peace one year later (January 1, 2016), Braxton promulgated a pastoral letter entitled “The Racial Divide Revisited: The Catholic

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\item \textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 8-9.
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Church and the Black Lives Matter Movement.” In this letter, Braxton recognized that racial tensions continued to increase throughout the past year and suggested that the Church might benefit from a conversation with the Black Lives Matter Movement. Braxton discussed his letter during a conference in Birmingham, Alabama in March 2016. At this meeting, Bishop Robert Baker of Birmingham met with Dean Timothy George of Samford University’s Beeson Divinity School and the Mayor of Birmingham, William Bell, Sr., to dialogue about the realities of race in America. The group, which also included a rabbi and an Iman, hoped to chart a common theological path to reconcile hearts and heal the persisting racial divide.

In the aftermath of each police shooting, as well as the revenge shooting in Dallas (five police officers murdered in Dallas, Texas, by Micah Johnson, July 8, 2016) and the massacre of nine persons in Charleston (Mother Emanuel African Methodist Church by Dylann Roof, June 17, 2015), religious communities, including the Catholic parishes and groups, have gathered to pray and support each other. In many cases, the need for dialogue was raised, and in a few cases, the necessity of action was proffered and some changes were made. For example, in the wake of Michael Brown’s death, Archbishop Robert Carlson of St. Louis reinstated the archdiocese’s racial equality task force. According to the archdiocesan Peace and Justice Commission’s Director, Maria Kenyon, the task force was charged with

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“working on the issues of poverty, education, obviously, racism and the lack of health care and meaningful employment, basing all of their work on the family unit.” St. Louis area Catholic and religious leaders began to initiate dialogue between Blacks and whites through a series of meetings called “sacred conversations,” in which both groups discussed their different points of view and experiences.

There have been other well-intentioned responses that demonstrate awareness of the need for racial reconciliation, with some programs acknowledging structural racism and the need for action. Some steps to mitigate racism, such as those enacted in the Archdiocese of St. Louis, are basically aimed at white audiences. Although a positive measure, the more productive scenarios include both races. Some Church efforts to address race relations, which have included Black and white participants, have predated the current intense racial milieu. For example, the USCCB Secretariat for Cultural Diversity has offered “intercultural competency” training sessions to parishes since 2013. According to USCCB Assistant Director for African American Affairs, Donna Grimes, discussion at these sessions has revealed a desire for the Church to address racism more aggressively. “People would really like

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17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

to hear more from the bishops. This is what I keep hearing. They say, 'Do they (the bishops) care? Is church really a home for me?'”\textsuperscript{20} The bishops’ response remains characteristically tepid and devoid of concern for achieving racial justice.

\textit{The USCCB Response – Tepid Once More}  On June 10, 2015, Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Kentucky, President of the USCCB, issued a statement “pledging to work for healing and reconciliation after a series of racial conflicts.”\textsuperscript{21} Although he acknowledged the history of racial injustice, accompanied by the lack of educational, employment, and housing opportunities for Black Americans, Kurtz advocated moral suasion and personal interaction as a means of working toward racial reconciliation. Once again, the Church denied the presence of structural racism within and outside of the institution and the need to prioritize an increase in Black Catholic leadership in order to address the sin of racism.

After the horrific murders of Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, and the five Dallas police officers between July 5-7, 2016\textsuperscript{22}, Archbishop Kurtz represented the USCCB through a brief statement calling for peace and asked constituents to pray “For the comfort of everyone affected and that our national conversation will bear the good fruit of healing and peace.”\textsuperscript{23} Again, Kurtz offered the solution of prayer


\textsuperscript{23} Jaycox, “Bishops’ Call for Peace Amid Racism is Obscure, Counterproductive.”
without mentioning the possibility of justice, a prayer to end hostilities without confronting the underlying causes of social conflict. The bishops seem relatively unconcerned about the context of these killings; the letter referred to Sterling and Castille as “two men” or “suspects,” without noting that these men were Black and how that reality impacted the police response. The statement did nothing to promote change in societal structures nor did it reveal a sense of shared responsibility for the current situation due to the Church’s historic complicity in racism.  

According to Bryan Massingale,

Police violence exists within a wider context of racial division and racial understandings and misunderstandings and injustice and in that sense the police are reflections of systemic problems, they’re not aberrations from the American norm, so I don’t want to make the police scapegoats for broader patterns and issues . . . Racism is a soul sickness; it’s a profound warping of the human spirit . . . [body cameras, better training of police will contribute to ending the problem] but to my mind, they are going to be limited and even ineffective if we don’t address these issues as soul issues and that should be what religious faith and Catholic faith is all about . . . until we have the willingness to address it, and not just address it rationally but to address it using the best resources of symbol and ritual, we won’t be able to really deal with or get ourselves out of this destructive feedback loop that we are caught in.

Massingale also contends that the Church too often prioritizes “race relations” over “racial justice.”  

According to Michael Jaycox, Assistant Professor of Theology and Religious Studies at Seattle University, “Despite the bishops’ past and

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24 Ibid.


present ineptitude in leading American Catholics, and particularly white Catholics, to confront their own complicity in racism, they can and must do better than this recent statement. Any possibility of their having moral authority and credibility depends on their willingness to do so."

The Church as an institution has reached a crossroads where it can either address the subject of racial injustice squarely, or, as in the past, obscure the subject with rhetoric.

The position of the institutional Church in regards to racism in the United States should not be surprising as it reflects the current state of racial affairs within the Church. As described in Chapter Four, Bishop Fernand Cheri asserts that Black Catholics are generally not respected within the Church and are, instead, considered to be "outreach." Theologian Diana Hayes, when addressing the five concerns for Black Catholics in the United States, highlights the question of their authenticity. Repeatedly, Hayes argues, Black Catholics have had to prove the legitimacy of their presence within the Church as a distinct group with a history, culture, and traditions worthy not only of being preserved but also of being shared with the Church as a whole.

Some Hopeful Episcopal Measures  On September 8, 2016, in response to the aftermath of police shootings, the USCCB announced that the Subcommittee on African American Affairs was drafting a new pastoral letter on racism. This document will address the manifestation of racism in society and in the Church and

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27 Jaycox, "Bishops’ Call for Peace Amid Racism is Obscure, Counterproductive."

28 Diana Hayes, “Black Catholics in the United States” in Many Faces, One Church, eds. Peter C. Phan and Diana Hayes (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 55.
will be the first formal document on race published by the USCCB since its 1979 pastoral letter *Brothers and Sisters to Us*. In addition, a task force has been formed to work with local communities and churches to promote peace and healing. Chaired by Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory of Atlanta, the task force will seek to provide best practices for churches and local groups on how to engage in dialogue that will promote peace and reconciliation.\(^{29}\) The hope is that unlike the cautious reception and implementation of *Brothers and Sisters to Us*, this new pastoral letter will be embraced and applied vigorously. It will be essential, however, that the letter demand racial justice through the breakdown of structures that are in operation within the Church in order to lend credibility to the Church’s role as a model for the nation.

Prayer, reflection, and discussion, such as that promoted by the Community of Colors workshops sponsored by Pax Christi USA, are necessary to build understanding and peace. Studying Catholic social justice documents, particularly those dealing with the principles of human dignity; the preferential option for the poor, vulnerable and marginalized; and the constructive role of government and solidarity; would encourage more Catholics to rise up against the violence that plagues the United States.\(^{30}\) Associate Professor of Theology at Mount Mary University in Milwaukee, Shawnee Daniel-Sykes insists, “Catholic social justice

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\(^{30}\) Sadowski, “Theologians Press US Bishops to Declare Racism ‘Intrinsic Evil.’”
principles call the Catholic Church, along with its consistent ethic of life position, to wake up and stop the eerie silence on this grave moral issue.”31 Education is imperative in order to promote recognition that systems need to be changed; however, it is only too apparent that the Catholic response to systemic racism stops short when prayer and discussion lead to changing structures.

Although the U.S. presidential election of 2016 is far more complicated than “racist Trump voters” against “enlightened, tolerant Democrats,”32 it cannot be denied that racism played a significant role in the Trump victory. Within ten days of the November 2016 election of Donald Trump, the Southern Poverty Law Center reported 876 incidents of racial hatred.33 Yet, in USCCB President Archbishop Joseph Kurtz’s formal statement after the election, the first specific item he mentioned in terms of working with President-elect Trump was the protection of human life from its most vulnerable beginning to its natural end. While maintaining the rights of the unborn, migrants, and refugees, Kurtz did not mention systemic racism or the recent racial tensions.34


33 Ibid.

M. T. Davila, an associate professor of Christian ethics at Andover Newton Theological School in Massachusetts, is a consultant to the USCCB on the pastoral letter on race currently being written. Although she finds that it is an “opportune and complicated time” for the bishops to speak out about racism, she doubts that clergy will preach about structural injustice. Davila contends that Archbishop Wilton Gregory’s recent (November 2016) reflection on racism did not go far enough, stating, “When the Catholic faithful have been barraged by certain bishops about the sin of voting this way and that, I find it to be poor leadership to not address the sin of racial injustice similarly.”

Soon after the 2016 election, Massingale was a panelist at an event focused on what the future might mean for Blacks, Hispanics, immigrant, and the poor in America. Unable to answer the question, Massingale turned to the groundbreaking writings of civil rights leader, Martin Luther King, Jr. King had called for a transformation of society, believing that racism was a “soul sickness” affecting America’s national soul. Affirming that the battle against racism has not been won, Massingale argued, “Racism in America has become a spiritual cataract that limits our vision, and whom we do and do not notice. Racism is revealed today in a lack of empathy and profound indifference. It’s a pervasive lack of concern and social callousness in a majority of society to the horrors and scandals in our midst.” And, unfortunately, Catholicism does not treat racism as a social sin for which the

35 Gehring, “Catholic and the Conversation on Race.”


268
community bears some responsibility, despite Pope John Paul II identifying racism as the U.S. national sin during his 1999 visit.

During a Fordham University Department of Theology and Office of Alumni Relations discussion in January 2017, Bryan Massingale argued that truth is essential in discussing the incoming policies of President Trump, who won 52 percent of the Catholic vote, according to a Pew national exit poll. He stated, “Trump may have won the presidency, but that election did not un-elect my conscience.”

Massingale stressed the potential need for civil disobedience in order to bring all aspects of Catholic social teaching to the forefront. In February 2017, Massingale reported that Black students are fearful over the rancorous climate created during the election and Trump’s statements in 2014 opposing the settlement in the case of five men wrongly convicted in the 1989 rape of a woman in Central Park. Despite their exoneration, Trump maintained the men should still be in prison because there’s something bad about them. Despite the bishops’ past and present ineptitude in leading American Catholics, and particularly white Catholics, to confront their own complicity in racism, now, more than ever, they can and must do better than their recent statements. Any possibility of their having moral authority and credibility depends on their willingness to do so.

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38 Ibid.

Bishop Braxton and Black Lives Matter--A Conversation  As mentioned earlier, after a year of exacerbated racial conflicts due to police shootings and other atrocities, Bishop Edward K. Braxton thought it was urgent to follow up his pastoral letter on the racial divide with the companion piece, “The Catholic Church and the Black Lives Matter Movement: The Racial Divide in the United States,” which was promulgated for the World Day of Peace, January 1, 2016. In this pastoral, Braxton asserted that the Catholic Church might benefit from a conversation with the Black Lives Matter Movement.

In order to establish clarity, Braxton began the letter by briefly describing the inception of the movement. He continued to explain that the protest expression “Black Lives Matter” is a dramatic way of calling attention to a reality largely ignored by the larger society; it is an appeal to end systemic racism so that all Americans will enjoy equal safety, education, and employment opportunities;

40 Black Lives Matter began as a hash tag, which became a protest slogan and fueled an Internet driven international protest confronting what its originators and others believe to be indifference to the deaths of young, unarmed Black men at the hands of white law enforcement officers. The phrase is more a call to action against racial profiling, police brutality, and racial injustice than a specific organization. The first occurrence of BLM occurred in 2013 when a Facebook post by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi used the expression after George Zimmerman was acquitted in the shooting death of Trayvon Martin. These women created the BLM hash tag and social media pages. Later, after Michael Brown was fatally shot in Ferguson, Missouri, and Eric Garner died in Staten Island, New York, the movement gained greater prominence. Demonstrators and marchers around the country and around the world shouted, “Hands up! Don’t shoot,” “I can’t breathe,” and “Black Lives Matter,” to call attention to what is perceived to be systemic bias and racial prejudice in the criminal justice system and among some representatives of law enforcement. The complaint is not that the person is necessarily innocent but that the person should not be “tried, convicted, and executed” on the streets. (Braxton, “The Racial Divide Revisited,” 7-8).

41 The African American unemployment rate was 8.8 in February 2016, more than double the 4.3 rate for whites. African American income levels have been stagnant since the recession of 2007-2008. Whites possess seven times the wealth of blacks according to a recent study by the Urban Institute, an economic think tank in Washington, DC. Aaron Morrison, “Pope Francis and Black Lives Matter: For African Americans, Pope US Visit Puts Focus on Social Justice and Racial Disparity,” International Business Times (September 25, 2015), www.ibtimes/pope-francis-black-lives0 (accessed October 22,
equal political power; and equal treatment by the criminal justice system. To those who proclaim "all lives matter," Braxton explains that Black Lives Matter responds in agreement, but asserts that white people do not live out this truth and instead resonate with a telling sentence in the dystopian novella, *Animal Farm*: “All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.”

Braxton predicted that because of the small percentage of African American Catholics, the Church would not interact in any significant way with Black Lives Matter. He was certain that some Black Catholics would be supportive of the issues raised by the movement, many of whom believe that the hierarchical Church is a large, white, conservative Republican institution that stands aloof from confrontational movements such as Black Lives Matter. Braxton recognizes that Black Lives Matter adherents do not value many of the moral teachings of the Church; and do not embrace traditional Christian theological ideas about praying to keep the peace and change hearts; but instead support a radical theology of inclusion inspired by the revolutionary Jesus. Nonetheless, Braxton believes that the movement’s call to change racist structures is important.

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43 Ibid., 9, 11-12.
Black Lives Matter and the IBCS

The IBCS hosted a Black Lives Matters Symposium in November of 2015, and ten months after Braxton’s pastoral, held a second conference with the intention of scheduling others on an annual basis. When the IBCS embraced the movement through the symposium model, Black Lives Matter moved from the streets into the academy, where the potential for formulating solutions for change could be sustainable.

Symposia held at Xavier University, the only historically Black Catholic University in America, drew sizable numbers of Black Catholics. Through keynote speakers, panel discussions, and workshops, distinguished Black and white theologians, journalists, judges, and agency heads, focused the energy of the street into useful action plans for African American communities. The conversation that Bishop Braxton proposed was not only happening but had advanced to another level. And the dialogue was initiated by Black Catholic leaders who have not dispensed with the Church’s moral authority and who understand prayer as critical in the process of conversion attendant with the liberating message of the Gospel.

As mentioned earlier, the first symposium, “Black Lives Matter: Race, Violence and Poverty Symposium,” was held on November 6-7, 2015. According to the IBCS director and brainchild for bringing the movement to Xavier, Father Maurice Nutt, the Black Lives Matter symposium extended the mission of service

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Xavier’s foundress, Saint Katharine Drexel, began when the University opened in 1925. Drexel founded Xavier at a time of segregation, effectively proving that “Black lives matter.”

Nutt stated,

I feel Xavier University, being Black and Catholic, needs to address these critical issues of racism, poverty, and unawareness in our society. I took this as a challenge and an encouragement to make something happen; thus, the birth of IBCS’s Black Lives Matter symposium. The Catholic Church has missed many opportunities to evangelize the African American community and had not always gone out of its way to learn Black history and culture. If we value life and see it as holy and sacred, then we must seek to save all lives and protect the most vulnerable and innocent in our communities.

The Symposium attracted over 1,000 guests and included a live stream of events and workshops to online audiences. Keynote speaker, Father Bryan Massingale, agreed with Braxton that the Church would not play a meaningful role in the Black Lives Matter Movement but not because of the relatively small number of African American Catholics, as the bishop had proposed. Massingale argued that the Church prioritizes “racial relations” over “racial justice.” He maintained that if the Church gets involved with Black Lives Matter it would be “only in ways that will not make

45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
47 The “Black Lives Matter: Race, Violence and Poverty Symposium,” held at the IBCS, included workshops on topics such as “Understanding White Privilege,” “Black Mass Incarceration,” “Black and Blue: How to Deal with Police,” “Racial and Cultural Consciousness,” and “The Enduring Effects of Black Poverty.” In addition, Times Picayune columnist Jarvis DeBerry moderated a panel discussion, which included Rev. Michael Pfleger, Judge Keva Landrum-Johnson, Judge Morris Reed, Erika McConduit, and Xavier’s Brian Turner.
its white members uncomfortable.” Massingale quoted Martin Luther King, Jr.’s, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” regarding King’s disappointment with the church. He asserted that the Catholic response to Black Lives Matter would likely be synonymous with the Black Catholic response and called on Black Catholics to continue the unfinished business of racial justice.

Seventeen years ago, Massingale proposed six shifts that needed to occur within the U.S. Catholic Church in order to achieve a more adequate ethics of racial justice. These modifications included changes from an emphasis on: 1) racism to white privilege; 2) parenesis to analysis; 3) personal sin to structures of sin; 4) decency to distributive justice; 4) moral suasion to liberating awareness; and 5) unconscious racial supremacy to intentional racial solidarity. In short, Massingale proposed that U.S. Catholic ethical reflections adopt a more structural and systemic approach to racism, that is, one that views that evil as primarily a cultural phenomenon, a culture of white advantage, privilege, and dominance that has derivative personal, interpersonal, and institutional manifestations.

It must be recognized, however, that over 300 Catholic theologians, both Black and white, signed a statement on racial justice in December of 2014, pledging to examine within themselves their complicity in the sin of racism and how it sustains false images of white superiority in relationship to Black inferiority. They

49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
promised to place their bodies and/or privilege on the line in visible, public solidarity with movements of protest to address deep-seated racism in our country. The statement acknowledged that pervasive systemic racial divisions compromise American structures of justice and called upon U.S. bishops to proactively proclaim and witness to our faith’s stand against racism.52

On October 21-22, 2016, the IBCS sponsored its second annual Black Lives Matter Symposium, “Urban Education Matters,” which focused on educational disparities within the African American community. Again, over 1000 persons attended from around the nation.53 On October 30, 2016, Father Nutt appeared on “The 411” with Anne Cutler on WGNO-ABC News in New Orleans, and explained more about the symposium. Without denigrating the idea that the need for protest “as the voice of the unheard” is necessary in order to raise awareness, Nutt argued that the Black Lives Matter movement was never meant to be concerned solely with police brutality. The recent topic, “Urban Education Matters,” was selected to address the recent drop in academic and educational rates among African American children in cities due to poverty, gang violence, and family structures. The BLM movement seeks educational reform so that Black children will not enter the “classroom-prison pipeline.” Nutt described how the number of prison cells presently being built correlates with the number of poor reading scores among current third graders. He described the ineffective disciplinary measures employed


in urban schools, which cause students to miss class and, often, return to the troubles of the neighborhood. Nutt contended that the movement seeks solutions to the social ills that affect the performance of Black children and cause them to enter the “pipeline.”

**The Impact of IBCS in the Future: Concluding Thoughts**

Becoming involved in the Black Lives Matter Movement is arguably the most significant action exercised by the IBCS to effectively reach a national audience and teach both Catholics and non-Catholics the truth about racial injustice and the critical need for reform. Not only do the symposia energize the participants and provide localized action plans, the conferences have brought essential national attention to the IBCS. If the message of Black Lives Matter could interface with the IBCS curriculum, including intentional anti-racist programs, the Institute could become a center of racial justice, leading to racial reconciliation in the Catholic Church. Courses could extend the material presented at Black Lives Matter symposium workshops and further enrich student knowledge of racial justice topics enveloped within a Catholic paradigm.

In March 2016, M. Shawn Copeland argued that “the innovative grassroots organizing style [of Black Lives Matter] builds upon and supports self-empowerment, decision-making, and liberatory action by Black people and those

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allied with them against anti-Black racist oppression.”\textsuperscript{55} Copeland views the principles of the movement as a kind of platform for renewed Black humanism (or a natural theology) that struggles for the survival, liberation, and flourishing of the Black human being as self and as subject. Some of the principles that Copeland connects to the movement include commitment to restorative justice; commitment to embody and practice justice, liberation and peace; empathy in the dealings of all with all others; and an “unapologetic” commitment to Black people and their freedom and right to live in justice.\textsuperscript{56} Copeland’s understanding of the movement’s platform for a renewed Black humanism or natural theology reinforces the feasibility of having courses inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement developed and taught in an academic setting such as the IBCS. Perhaps a new type of Black Catholic theology could emerge from a program that amalgamates Black Catholic spirituality, Catholic social teaching, and non-violent yet militant action in the cause of racial justice and eventual racial reconciliation.

IBCS’s holistic methodology could provide the prayer, dialogue, and generalized planning necessary for a virtue-based curriculum of racial justice, militancy, and hope, energized by the Black Lives Matters movement. This is not to say that racial justice leading to racial reconciliation is not being promoted through the current IBCS curriculum, but only that if done on a broader more intentional


\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
basis, the IBCS could become a “think tank” dedicated to the formation of an overarching framework of an action plan or series of action plans dedicated to the purpose of ending systemic racism and dissolving white privilege within and, correspondingly, outside of the Church. The liberative message of Black Catholic theology is not new, however, the infusion of vitality derived from the Black Lives Matter association could create more potent versions of programs such as Bishop Dale Melczek’s “Created in God’s Image” parish based action plans and programs.\(^57\)

As Xavier Associate Professor and IBCS instructor, Dr. Brian Turner proclaimed prior to the first symposium, “This could be the start of something big.”\(^58\)

*The Role of the Hierarchy and the Future of the IBCS*  If genuine anti-racism structures are to be established, or “institutionalized” within the American Catholic Church, the bishops must enforce this transformation. To quote theologian Jon Nilson, “Our bishops must act as successors of the apostles, not branch managers who simply follow directives from the ‘home office’ in Rome.”\(^59\) If anything positive


\(^58\) Lawson, “Xavier Takes Center Stage in Black Lives Matter Movement.”

can be extricated from the recent racial strife, it is an affirmation that the sin of racism is real and its effects are sometimes violent; at other times, they are “out of sight,” invisible yet pervasive. In either case, there is an urgent need for a long overdue resolution and although grassroots movements promote change, it is imperative that Church authorities enforce new policy.

The potential for a nationally recognized racial justice program, incorporating the content and spirit of the Black Lives Matter movement, would hopefully attract the support of the USCCB; the bishops could provide the advertisement and funding the IBCS has perpetually needed. Such a program should compel bishops to send seminarians, priests, and other ministers, both white and Black, to the Institute regardless of which type of community they serve. Pastors in Black communities need skills to enact racial justice action plans. Pastors in white communities need to learn how to teach their congregants the gospel imperative of racial justice and how they can cooperate in the elimination of white privilege. Although all white persons enjoy white privilege, they are often unaware of that fact and must be offered the opportunity for conversion. Without understanding the complexities and multiplicity of racial formation in U.S. history and the U.S. Church, it remains difficult to subvert the dominant patterns. Although Black Catholics need not wait for their white Catholic co-religionists in order to implement change, it would be optimal if Black and white Catholics could work together.

Will the IBCS continue to make an impact on Black Catholicism in the United States without such a program? Yes, as attested by students, faculty, and alumni

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60 Ibid., 91.
alike. The knowledge and skills offered, however, will continue to be circulated on a smaller scale, which would be unfortunate. The IBCS needs a plan that will attract USCCB support if the Institute wishes to grow deliberately. The Institute’s programs are exceptional because they provide a holistic curriculum dedicated to the formation of ministers for the Black Catholic community. These communities will always need well-formed catechists, liturgists, and other leaders who will find the IBCS on the “cutting edge” due to its high academic standards. The IBCS, through its association with noted historians and theologians such as Cyprian Davis, M. Shawn Copeland, Sister Jamie Phelps, Sister Eva Marie Lumas, and others, will remain a center for Black Catholic history, spirituality, and culture. These features will not change.

Currently, however, the programs are not as well attended as they should be. The staff is small and cannot be expected to promote the Institute in a grand fashion. As mentioned earlier, other factors mitigate against growing numbers at the IBCS, and these include student time constraints due to work commitments, and lack of tuition funding for ministers in financially depressed urban or rural parishes. Many IBCS participants are volunteers and depend on parishes and dioceses to send them to the Institute.

In addition, the Catholic population, outside of the Hispanic community, is diminishing due to a multitude of challenges. There are basically fewer Catholics available to attend the IBCS programs, although as alumnus Ashley Morris asserted, the IBCS programs could also benefit Latin/Hispanic Catholics.\textsuperscript{61} Bishop Cahill, for

\textsuperscript{61} Morris, Interview
instance, maintains that his IBCS education assisted him in ministering to immigrants, as well as to African Americans.62

The Black Lives Matter symposiums and an educational model incorporating the movement, particularly if they garnered episcopal support, would increase participation in the IBCS. If the Bishops prioritize the evangelization of a growing Black population through the reopening of urban parochial schools and Black Catholic ministry offices, and through the promotion of the enculturation of liturgy in parishes, perhaps the number of Black Catholics will sustain itself as well as grow. The most compelling reason for African Americans to explore membership in the Catholic Church, however, would be an assurance that the Church was serious about eliminating the sin of racism. As Bryan Massingale argues,

It is time for the U.S. Catholic Church, led by the bishops, to hold up racial injustice as an “intrinsic evil,” just as it has prioritized abortion and same-sex marriage. [Racial justice] is indeed a life issue.”63 . . . If standing against racism is not a priority for the Catholic Church and its approach to and engagement with this social evil is inadequate and ineffective, where does that leave the Black believer?64

62 Cahill, Interview.


64 Massingale, Racial Justice in the Catholic Church, 78.
Appendix One
Statistics Regarding the Institute for Black Catholic Studies Enrollment

I. These statistics regarding enrollment at the IBCS are not complete or consistent in nature, however, they reflect the Institute archives that were available for my review.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Statistics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>80 students participated in programs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>124 students participated in programs. 99 persons participated in the degree program. 25 participated in the IMANI catechist program. Degree students included 50 men and 49 women. There were 19 Black men, 29 white men, one Hispanic man, one Asian man, 25 Black women and 24 white women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>109 students participated in programs. 52 persons participated in the degree programs. 57 participated in IMANI catechist program. There were seven degree graduates and 11 IMANI graduates in 1990.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Only eight new degree students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>73 students participated in the degree program with 23 new students. There were four degree graduates and 11 IMANI graduates in 1992.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>97 students participated in programs. 45 participated in the degree program. 52 participated in Certificate and Enrichment programs. 25 participated in IMANI catechist program, ten in the Youth ministry program, 12 in the Leadership in the Faith Community program, and five in the Vocational Enrichment Program. There were three degree graduates and eight IMANI graduates in 1993. Some shifting due to the restructuring of the curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>51 students participated in the degree program, including ten students who were cross-registered from the Graduate school’s education program who participated in Leon Henderson’s course on the Black Family. There were eight degree faculty members since the catechetics and educational courses were cancelled, the latter due to low registration and the former because of lack of available faculty in the discipline area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>26 students participated as full or transitory students in the degree program. Included in this number were seven new students including three that were transitory students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>96 students participated in programs. 35 students participated in the degree program and 65 students participated in the C &amp; E programs. 23 students participated in Leadership in the Faith Community, 17 in the Master Catechist program, ten in the Youth Ministry program, five in the Youth Empowerment program, ten in the Lay Retreat, and zero in the Elder program. There was one degree graduate and four C &amp; E graduates: three Youth Ministry certificates and one Leadership certificate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>111 students participated in programs. 41 students participated in the degree program and 70 students participated in the C &amp; E program. 22 participated in Leadership in the Faith Community, 17 in the Master Catechist program, 17 in the Youth Ministry Program, Five in the Youth Empowerment program, zero in the Lay Retreat program, and five in the Eldership program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>The C &amp; E population was 75 percent lay and 85 percent of the attendees were African Americans. The largest number of lay participants had traditionally come from Louisiana (44 this year,) but the majority came from around the country; two persons attended from Belize.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>119 students participated in programs. 30 participated in the degree program and 89 students participated in the C &amp; E programs. 24 participated in the Leadership program, 19 in the Master Catechist program, nine in the Youth Ministry program, 16 in the Youth Empowerment program, zero in the Lay Retreat program, and 21 in the Eldership program. The success of the eldership and youth empowerment programs was noted. The degree program was down to 30 students. Many young and low-income students were being trained for work in their parishes. There were 11 degree graduates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>95 students participated in programs. 43 students participated in the degree program and 52 participated in the C &amp; E programs. 18 participated in the Leadership program, eight in the Master Catechist program, six in the Youth Ministry program, six in the Lay Retreat program, and 14 in the Eldership program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>74 students participated in programs. 29 students participated in the degree program and 45 participated in C &amp; E programs. Nine participated in the Leadership program, 11 in the Master Catechist program, four in the Youth Ministry program, 17 in the Lay Retreat program, and four in the Eldership program. There were no degree graduates this year.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2004  
77 students participated in programs. 33 students participated in degree programs and 44 participated in C & E programs. Fourteen participated in the Leadership program, eight in the Catechist program, 11 in the Youth Ministry program, eight in the Lay Retreat program, and three in the Eldership program. There were four degree graduates this year.

In total, 23 students were from outside of Louisiana; one student was from Louisiana, with nine from New Orleans and surrounding towns. Ethnic/Racial/National Demographics were: 26 from the U.S. including 19 African Americans. The African Americans included: 3 priests, 2 deacons, 2 women religious, 10 laywomen, 2 laymen. Seven white Americans attended including: 3 priests, 2 seminarians, 1 woman religious, and 1 layman (doctoral student).

International students included 5 Continental Africans: 3 Nigerians (1 priest, 1 woman religious, 1 laywoman), 1 Ghana seminarian, and 1 Eritrean married layman. 3 Caribbean students attended including: 1 Haitian priest and 1 Belizean woman religious. Gender statistics 16 women: 15 Blacks (2 Africans, 12 African Americans, 1 Caribbean and 1 white Irish American. 17 Men: 11 Blacks (3 Africans, 7 African Americans, 1 Haitian), and 6 whites: (4 Germans, 2 Poles, 1 French-Irish). Marital status: Single 22 (including 8 ordained priests, 3 seminarians, 9 laywomen (including 4 women religious) and 2 laymen. Married: 11 (including 4 married deacons, 6 married laywomen and 1 layman. Divorced, unknown.
Degree student statistics were prepared by Sister Jamie Phelps for the Fund for Theological Education Meeting on February 10, 2004, some of it was adapted from her 2004 Center for Research on the Apostolate Report on Lay Ministry Training. Excluding priesthood or diaconate candidates or clergy:

Degree candidates: 4 sisters, 6 laymen, 10 laywomen; 2 white 18 Black.
Certificate candidates: 2 sisters, 7 lay Catholic men, 28 lay Catholic women; 2 white, and 35 Black. Transitional degree students not included. Age of all Students during the summer 2004: under age 30: 3 certificate candidates; 30-39 years, 5 degree, 15 certificate; 40-49 years: 24 degree and 20 certificate;

50-59 years: 4 degree, 3 certificate; 60 or older, 3 certificate.

Certificate and Enrichment Program Statistics 1999-2004 Leadership 23, 22, 24, 18, 9, 14, Catechist 17, 17, 19, 8, 11, 8, Youth Ministry: 10, 10, 9, 6, 4, 11, Youth Empowerment 5, 5, 16, Laity retreat: 10, 5, no, 6, 17, 8, Elders program: no, 5, 21, 14, 4, 3 Total certs: 65, 64, 89, 52, 45, 44.

In 2004, there were 3 priests in the C & E program and 1 continental Indian, 1 white, 1 Vietnamese, no seminarians, and 2 married deacons (1 African American and 1 White American). Marital status of C & E participants was as follows: 21 single, 8 married. Numbers of students who completed the program between Sept. 2003 and August 2004 in full time or part time ministry was 8. Full time: 2 Pastoral administration, 1 Part-time liturgy 1 Part-time youth ministry 1 Part-time religious ed. 1 volunteer catechists, 1 volunteer youth ministry, and 1 volunteer evangelization.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Statistics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grand totals were: 100, 105, 119, 95, 74, 77.</td>
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</table>
Appendix Two  
Biographies of the IBCS Faculty Members

**Rev. Bede Abram O.F.M., Conv**

Rev. Bede Abram, was a New York native and he attended St. Joseph Cupertino Novitiate in Ellicott City MD. Abrams professed his simple vows in 1962 and, after his undergraduate studies were completed in 1965, Abram professed his solemn vows. From 1967-1971, Abrams studied theology at Immaculate Conception Province, St. Anthony-on-Hudson, Rensselaer, NY. He was ordained a priest in 1971.¹

Abram’s Franciscan ministry embraced the parochial, educational, and college administrative apostolates. He was associated with IBCS from 1981-1991, and was a member of the first official faculty. On November 12, 1989, the Mayor of New Orleans conferred on Abrams the title of “Honorary Citizen.” Abrams died prematurely on January 20, 1991 at the age of 49. He was honored by the NBCC as a fine teacher, lecturer, revivalist, and theologian: “he sang his way into the hearts of thousands...he expanded the mind and thinking of many ... he challenged the thing of all types of folks ... he provided leadership at the IBCS ... he stirred the waters until others thirsted for knowledge ...” He was the first Black priest in the Franciscan Province of St. Anthony in the United States. ²

**Most Rev. Moses Bosco Anderson**

Bishop Anderson was born in Selma, Alabama in 1928 to a poor Baptist family. During his teenage years, he grew in appreciation of Catholicism despite being exposed to a culture that held a highly skeptical view of that faith. Secretly taking instructions, Anderson was professed

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² Ibid.
into the Catholic faith at age 20. By the time he was 21, Anderson was in formation for the priesthood with the Society of St. Edmund and had enrolled at Xavier University, Louisiana. After continuing his studies, Anderson was ordained in 1958. For the next few years, Anderson served as either a teacher or a pastor; at one parish he began a landmark interracial tutorial program.\(^3\)

In 1968, Anderson returned to Xavier and earned an MA in natural law and theology. At the same time, he became involved in the New York-Vermont Youth project and served as an advocate of educational and civil rights issues for young African Americans. In 1971, he started a ten-year assignment as an administrator and professor at Xavier University, Louisiana. Anderson also engaged in advanced studies at the University of Ghana in Legon, West Africa.\(^4\)

Anderson was appointed auxiliary bishop for the Archdiocese of Detroit in 1982, which made him the first Black bishop in that diocese. Simultaneously, Anderson helped to build a pastorate in Ghana. He was made a chief of the Ashanti Tribe in Kumaadi Ghana in 1990, from which his great-great-great grandmother came as a slave. Having a passion for the arts, Anderson built strong relationships with artists and musicians and made contributions from his extensive international art collections to Xavier University, among others institutions. Bishop Anderson died in 2013.\(^5\)

\(^3\) Obituary: Bishop Moses B. Anderson, A. J. Desmond and Sons, Troy MI. (January 1, 2013).

\(^4\) Ibid.

\(^5\) Ibid.
Rev. David H. Benz

Rev. David H. Benz was a member of the founding group who proposed the Institute, as well as the consulting committee appointed by Xavier to initiate the IBCS pilot program. Benz was later honored with the title “Monsignor.” Monsignor Benz served in the Air Force prior to returning to his native Pennsylvania where he entered St. Charles Borromeo Seminary and was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia in 1975. After earning a Master of Sociology degree from Temple University, Benz was assigned to military installations until returning to the Archdiocese of Philadelphia where he had served in area parishes until retiring to Florida.6

Sister Thea Bowman, F.S.P.A., Ph.D.

Of all the dynamic and inspirational personalities associated with the IBCS, Sister Thea Bowman is probably the most widely known. Sister Thea was a member of the first formal IBCS faculty and remained part of the Institute for the rest of her life. As a founding faculty member, it is reported that she brought her indomitable spirit, engaging personality, and prophetic vision to the mission of the IBCS. Over the course of her tenure she taught courses in Black literature, religion and the arts, the spirituals and preaching. Her students attested that Sister Thea’s classes were not just lectures but were reported to be life-changing encounters.7

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7 Maurice J. Nutt, ed., Thea Bowman, My Own Words (Liguori, Missouri: Liguori, 2009), xi.
Bertha Elizabeth “Birdie” Bowman was born in the small rural town of Yazoo City, Mississippi in 1937; her grandfather was a slave, her father was a physician, and her mother was a teacher and a principal. Her father had an opportunity to practice in New York City but remained in Mississippi to care for African Americans, because many were denied medical care in the segregated south. Her mother, Mary Esther, taught Birdie a love for learning and an appreciation of culture and the arts. Her mother wanted her young daughter to be a proper, sophisticated young lady but Birdie had a tendency to be bold and rowdy, a trait that once refined came to serve her well. She witnessed at an early age how Blacks were disrespected, rejected, and oppressed by systemic racist ideologies and institutions of the day. She was taught not to strike back, however, and will later understand this as the basis of her calling as a bridge of understanding and peacemaking among various cultures. As a self-proclaimed “old folks” child, Birdie appreciated the wit and wisdom of the elders and was, therefore, open to absorb the richness of African American culture as well as to learn that God was indeed the God of the poor and oppressed who could, “make a way out of no way!”

A Methodist child of the Deep South, Birdie converted as a nine-year-old to Catholicism through the influence of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, as they staffed her grammar school, The Holy Child of Jesus. She was impressed by the sister’s ability to love and care for others, especially the poor and needy.

Her parent’s only child, Birdie staged a hunger strike in protest to her father’s opposition of her joining the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. Dr. Bowman feared mistreatment of his daughter in an all-white, basically Irish/German order in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Bowman told her father, “I am going to make them like me,” and she entered the Sisters in 1953 at the age of 15. Her parents would eventually convert to Catholicism.
Taking the name “Thea” to honor her father, Theon Bowman, she studied at the Sister's Viterbo College in La Crosse before professing her final vows. It was not always easy during her early years of formation as Sister Thea experienced attitudes ranging from resistance to overt racism from the community.\(^\text{11}\) She derived support, however, from many within her order, which ultimately gave her a religious identity, as well as a platform from which to speak as a well-educated person. Sister Thea began a career of teaching but it was soon recognized that she was best suited to be a college professor. Sister Thea eventually earned a Ph.D. in English from Catholic University.\(^\text{12}\)

During her years in Washington, Sister Thea experienced the turbulent crux of the civil rights movement and began her own spiritual and cultural awakening. Upon graduation, she traveled throughout Europe and studied at Oxford University. When she returned to Wisconsin, she taught at Viterbo University in Wisconsin and challenged her students to develop critical thinking skills; she began to be called upon to share her gift of Blackness through song and presentations on the college circuit.\(^\text{13}\)

Sister Thea’s message of Black empowerment and evangelization amid racial tensions, both within and outside of the Church, was made more powerful through her joyful, yet persuasive presence. She had personally experienced the struggle of uniting her Black cultural background with the staid structures of the Church, yet it was her battle to legitimize the expression of Black culture inside the Church that has won her the most acclaim. She was one of the pioneers in the use of Spirituals as well as African rituals and dance in the context of the Mass. “For years the white Catholic Church imposed its Caucasian methodology on Black Catholics,” she stated. “You see, we don’t want to change the sacraments. We don’t want to
change the theology of the Church. We just want to express that theology within the roots of our Black spiritual culture.”

In 1978, Sister Thea returned to Canton to care for her aging parents and was appointed to direct the Office of Intercultural affairs for the Diocese of Jackson. In 1980, she began to teach at the IBCS. However, in 1984, the same year in which she lost both her parents, Sister Thea was diagnosed with breast cancer and, instead of surrendering to the disease, the years leading up to her death found her giving lectures, recitals, short courses, workshops and conferences. She spread the good news internationally: people are gifted, Black is beautiful, and cross-cultural collaboration enriches both education and life. From the time of her diagnosis through 1988, she had been in touch, at least annually, with Father Thaddeus Posey, at first, reporting no major health issues: “God isn’t finished with me yet,” she proclaimed.

Sister Thea had experienced a revitalizing trip to Africa in 1984 where, “I met people who looked and thought and moved like me; one of my Nigerian brothers and his wife named their baby Thea, a great honor.”

In January 1988, Sister Thea continued to report no major health crises. She summarized her conferences and revivals, participation in the National Black Catholic Congress in Washington, and her weekend with Harry Belafonte and Whoopi Goldberg. In May and then in September of that year, Sister Thea had appeared on 60 Minutes with some of the students from the Holy Child Jesus School as well as friends and students from IBCS. She told Mike Wallace, “You know women don’t preach in the Catholic Church but who do you listen to first, the minister or your mama?” In October, she appeared on the 700 Club and also taped a segment for Ebony-Jet Showcase with children from Holy Child Jesus School and with parishioners at St. Benedict the Black Church in Grambling, LA.
In March 1988, however, Sister Thea was seriously ill. In August 1988, *The Times Picayune* of New Orleans featured Harry Belafonte’s recent visit to Xavier, where he found himself, “dancing in a second line led by a black nun in a wheelchair.”21 Sister Thea was bald and in a wheelchair due to recent chemotherapy sessions, yet she continued to direct the Holy Child Jesus School choir. She had earlier proclaimed “Lord, let me live until I die.”22

In November 1988, Sister Thea wrote Posey that she had spent two weeks with the Maryknoll Sisters in Kenya and Tanzania where she had done a workshop on racism. She felt energized. “With my bald head I was mistaken for Maasai, even by the Maasai”23 She was carried around on her bed when her wheelchair couldn’t navigate the uphill terrain.24

Sister Thea was most famously known for the day, in June 1989 at Seton Hall University, when she made the American Bishops stand, link arms, and then sing “We Shall Overcome” at the end of a speech she was giving at the USCCB conference on Black Catholicism. She had answered for them the question of what it meant to be Black and Catholic: “I come to my church fully functioning . . . I bring myself, my Black self, all that I am, all that I have, all that I hope to become. I bring my whole history, my tradition, my experience, my culture, my African American song and dance and gesture and movement and teaching and preaching and healing and responsibility as gift to the church.”25 Some Bishop’s swayed, while others wept. Nine months later, on March 30, 1990, Sister Thea was dead; her funeral was thronged with people of every color, age, denomination, and economic status.26

In articles written to commemorate both the 10th and 25th anniversary of her death, it remained clear that Sister Thea continues to inspire Black Catholics as well as Catholics in general; her message is to recognize all cultures and all races within the Church.27 Bowman’s spirit unquestionably permeates the ethos of the IBCS.
It is also indisputable that the entire remarkable group of original IBCS administrators and educators held several basic characteristics in common. All rose against the odds amidst racism and poverty. Many were not born Catholic but were influenced by religious sisters to embrace the faith to the point where entrance into a religious or clerical state followed. The evangelizing importance of Catholic schools, particularly for non-Catholics, is proven despite the seemingly rational conclusion that schools should be closed due to a lack of Catholic students. Despite a segregated and often hostile environment, these Black Catholic leaders were nurtured by the inspirational individuals who gave them indestructible foundations of faith.
Monsignor Branch was a member of the consulting committee for the pilot program at the IBCS and, later, taught at the Institute. While still a child, his family had left New Orleans for Washington, DC, where there were more job opportunities for Blacks. His parents worked hard, as well as set an example of living faith. Branch remarked, “Our next-door neighbor joked one day that even the air in our house was Catholic.”\textsuperscript{28} The Branch family, however, was not welcome to attend the local church, St. Martin of Tours. Instead they attended St. Augustine Church where his brother was the first Black altar boy. Branch felt the call to the priesthood in the sixth grade and credits religious sisters for shaping his faith. His brother, Leslie, also became a priest, as well as the first Black Catholic chaplain in the U.S. Navy.\textsuperscript{29} Upon graduation from high school, Branch joined the Xaverian Brothers; it was the height of the civil rights movement and he and his brother “would be desegregating parishes in southern Maryland without even knowing it.”\textsuperscript{30} In 1974, he became a priest for the Archdiocese of Louisville, Kentucky, and he celebrated his first Mass in the church where his family was not welcome. “God always writes straight with crooked lines,”\textsuperscript{31} he declared. Branch completed his D.Min. at Howard University and, following a six-year tenure there, he

\textsuperscript{28} Andrew Nelson, "A Priest for 41 Years, Msgr. Branch Wants to Turn His Attention to the Poor," \textit{The Georgia Bulletin: The Newspaper of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta} (August 6, 2015), \url{www.georgiabulletin.org} (accessed March 12, 2016).

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
served as University Chaplain Director of Campus Ministry at Catholic University. He had also been chaplain at Grambling State University in Grambling, Louisiana.\textsuperscript{32}

In 1990, Branch moved to Atlanta at the request of Archbishop Eugene Marino S.S.J., to revive a Catholic presence at the Atlanta University Center (AUC), a cluster of historically African American institutions of higher learning, boasting the highest concentration of scholars of African heritage in the world. From that time until 2014, Branch (now Monsignor Branch as of 2013,) was the Catholic Chaplain at Lyke House, which was the Catholic center of AUC. He was known at Lyke as a “down to earth approachable priest,”\textsuperscript{33} who cared for all regardless of religion. During his twenty-five year assignment, Branch orchestrated the construction of a $2 million dollar Catholic facility modeled after the stone churches in Ethiopia, which was named after the late Atlanta Archbishop, Most Reverend James P. Lyke, O.F.M.\textsuperscript{34}

Branch led his peers as president of the NBCCC. After retiring in 2015, he turned his attention to the poor and marginalized through work with both the Catholic Relief Services and the Campaign for Human Development.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
Father Conwill grew up in the same west Louisville, Kentucky neighborhood as Muhammad Ali, which was a part of the city described as so “back-of-town” that the roads were not paved until the 1950s. His mom was a daily communicant at St. Louis Bertrand Church and she demonstrated the gifts of perseverance and long-suffering. “We were in the pews closer to the sanctuary-probably in one of the first 10 pews,” Conwill recalled, “An usher came up and said, ‘We’ve got the last three pews in the back of the church for colored folks.’” That was Conwill’s first experience with racism as he witnessed his mother’s tears.

After his dad died from a freak accident when he was 11, his mother impressed on all of the children the importance of education as a launching pad from the gravel road. She became the first African American principal of a Louisville Catholic school. Four of her children earned doctorates, including Conwill who was ordained a priest in 1973 and later earned a Ph.D. in history and cultural anthropology. Conwill chaired the history department at Morehouse College in Atlanta until coming to Xavier University, Louisiana, as a Campus Minister in 2010. In 2012, he was inducted into the Martin Luther King, Jr. International Board of Preachers in Atlanta and is the only Catholic priest to be honored among the 36 preachers selected.

Conwill admitted that he was a little over the top in the 1970s when he penned a critical essay on the slipshod preaching he had heard at Catholic liturgies. He wrote: “The pap that passes for preaching in the Catholic Church is pathetic.” He maintains, however, that every homily must respond to the plea from the 20th chapter of John: “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”
Prior to her association with the ICBS, the former Sister Eugene, was a founding member of the National Office of Black Catholics and the first associate director of the Black Sisters’ Conference. Eugene was a member of the first delegation to meet with Dr. Francis and became a participant of the consultant group for the Institute. She was an inaugural faculty member and remained part of the faculty until 1982, although her relationship with the Institute continues to today “through the numbers of participants I have known mentored, supported, and recommended that they “check out” the IBCS for at least a semester.” Eugene believes that being so intimately involved in the shaping of courses, curricula, and logistics at the inception of the IBCS was one of the watershed moments that marked her life as a Black Catholic woman, academic, and scholar.

Eugene is a prolific writer and she has written extensively on womanist subjects, social ethics, and religious education from the Black perspective. She has also been described as advancing a “peaceful, ecological society of diverse peoples and a pluralistic cross-cultural existence.” Her wisdom and prophetic discernment called LACES (catechesis that is Liberating, Affirms Blackness, aims at Conversion, Evangelizes the people and Synthesizes the sacred and


41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.
secular) was highlighted in “Keep on Teaching,” a manual that focused on evangelizing strategies.44

Most Rev. Wilton Gregory

The former Father Gregory was among the first official faculty of the IBCS. Gregory wanted to become a priest before he converted to Catholicism, which he did while a student at St. Carthage School in Chicago. Born in Chicago in 1947, Gregory was ordained a priest in 1973 after attending Quigley Preparatory School South, Niles College (Now St Joseph’s College of Loyola University) and St. Mary of the Lake Seminary. Three years after ordination, Gregory began his graduate studies at the Pontifical Liturgical Institute in Rome where he earned his doctorate in Sacred Theology in 1980. In 1983, he was ordained as an auxiliary bishop of Chicago and, in 1994, he was installed as the seventh bishop of the Diocese of Belleville, Illinois. In 2004, he became the sixth archbishop of the Archdiocese of Atlanta where he still serves.45

Archbishop Gregory has held many leading roles in the Church. He was the first Black bishop to be elected president of the USCCB in 2001. During his tenure in office, the crisis of sexual abuse by Catholic clergy was exposed and, under his leadership, the “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People” was created. Gregory has written extensively on Church issues including a pastoral statement on the death penalty and he has published numerous articles on the subject of liturgy, particularly in the African-American community.


**Sister Patricia Haley, S.C.N.**

Sister Patricia was one of the founding members of the National Black Sisters Conference in 1968 and, through the NBSC, she brought the “Formation Program” to support vowed religious, seminarians, and clergy to IBCS. She was born in Columbus, Georgia, and was raised in Montgomery and Birmingham, Alabama, entering the Congregation of Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, Kentucky. Sister Patricia remains the Coordinator of the Spiritual Enrichment Program for the IBCS and when the Institute is not in session, she lives in St. Petersburg, Florida and works in the Diocese of St. Petersburg as coordinator for Black Catholic Ministry in the Multicultural Office. Sister Patricia also teaches in the Diocesan Lay Pastoral Ministry Institute, is a volunteer at the Pinellas County Juvenile Detention Center through the Diocesan Prison Ministry program, and is a member of the Diocesan Leadership Team for the Disciples in Mission Ministry.46

**Sister Dolores Harrall, Ed.D.**

Sister Dolores Harrall, Ed.D., a native of Boston, attended St. Frances de Sales school from Grades 1-12 and then entered Cardinal Cushing High School as the first Black student. She entered the Waltham novitiate of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur in 1955, earned a bachelor’s degree from Emmanuel College, a master’s degree from Fairfield University, and a doctorate from the University of Massachusetts in Amherst in educational leadership and administration. Sister Dolores was a founding member of the NBSC and distinguished herself as a Black Catholic teacher, school counselor, psychologist, and principal for over 25 years. And, she was outspoken. In a 1984 *New York Times* interview, Sister Dolores stated that at St. Francis de Sales Elementary School in the Roxbury section of Boston, “We teach Christ here,

not the Church . . . Christ didn’t teach the church, he taught love.” Sister Dolores expressed that sometimes the Catholic Church has been “racist” towards Blacks and she reported that she was the only Black nun assigned to Boston at that time. Moreover, she complained that there were no Black leaders and very few Black priests within the Boston Archdiocese although it was the third largest in the country. Nevertheless, her school played an important role in Boston, especially when the city experienced “white flight” after the 1974 court ordered busing to end public school segregation. Due to this situation, Black parents sought refuge for their children in parochial schools. Because of the efforts of Sister Dolores and Principal Rev. Barton E. Harris, a Baptist minister, St. Frances de Sales’ academic progress was impressive. Sister Dolores believed that the school’s philosophy, Nguzo Saba, the Swahili word for “seven principles,” promoted student success through hard work and faith. Sister Dolores died in 1988 at the age of 51.
Diana L. Hayes, S.T.D., S.T.L., Ph.D.

Dr. Hayes was born in Buffalo, New York in 1947. She is currently Emerita Professor of Systematic Theology at Georgetown University, retired. Hayes holds the Juris Doctor from George Washington National Law Center, a Ph.D. in Religious Studies from the Catholic University of Louvain, and the S.T.D. and S.T.L. degrees from the Catholic University of America. She was also the first African American woman to earn a Pontifical Doctorate in Theology at the Catholic University of Louvain.

Hayes is the author/editor of seven books, as well as 85 articles and book chapters, and she has won numerous awards including the Elizabeth Seton Medal for Outstanding Woman Theologian. She has lectured throughout the United States, Europe, and South Africa on issues of race, class, gender and religion, womanist and Black theologies, women in the Catholic Church, and African American Religions.50

Leon Henderson, M.A.

Leon Henderson was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, and was a product of Catholic schools in that city. He served in the US Navy from 1967-1973 after which he graduated college and then earned an M.S. degree from Washington University in St. Louis. Henderson served the IBCS community as both an instructor and administrator for 14 years; during the school year, he taught and was later President of Cardinal Ritter Preparatory School in St. Louis, Missouri.51 Henderson was described to be a rare jewel, who dedicated his life to enriching the lives of St. Louis youth. Described as a faith-filled leader with a sharp wit for comedy, whose


students would laugh while they learned, Henderson was a father figure to many. He loved being Black and believed in the importance of instilling racial pride in his students.  

Henderson died of ALS in January of 2016. In a tribute entitled, “Leon Henderson- A Gleaming of How Black Men Should Be,” it was emphasized that the community lost a brother, father, uncle, friend, and colleague. Many called him “baba,” a male elder or family friend, which is a term that carries with it an incredible level of respect in the African American community. “Uncle Leon” was described as a teacher with Afrikan consciousness, a holistic approach, a collective perspective, spiritual connection, intelligence, toughness, human compassion, assertiveness, and soul. Henderson certainly epitomized the administration and faculty of the IBCS, who have collectively demonstrated a joyful love of Black Catholicism and a desire to share and develop this profound affection with those serving that community.  

Dr. Nathan William Jones

Dr. Jones was born in 1952 in Indianapolis, Indiana. He earned an M.Div. at Virginia Theological Seminary, Lynchburg, Virginia in 1978, a M.A. in Religious Studies at Mundelein College, Chicago in 1982, and a Ph.D. in Urban Socio-Religious Studies at Union Graduate School, Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1978. Jones was a pioneer in bringing the richness of Afrocentric spirituality and worship to the Black Catholic Community of Chicago. Among his many writing and editing experiences, Jones’s Cross Over: A Celebration of Black


53 Emerson, “Leon Henderson-A Gleaming Example of How Black Men Be,”

54 Dr. Nathan W. Jones, curriculum vitae, IBCS 1990-1994, XULA Archives and Special Collections.
Spirituality was a multi-media construction of Black American sacred and secular music, drama, ritual, dance, prayer and storytelling arts and it was later edited and produced for CBS TV in Chicago. Jones was known and respected around the country for his work in African American catechesis and was regarded as one of the greatest black religious educators of our time. He was particularly known for his book: Sharing the Old, Old Story: Educational Ministry in the Black Community. 55

Jones served the Archdiocese of Chicago for fifteen years before accepting a visiting assistant professorship at Loyola Marymount University in 1992. During his career, he worked in parish ministry, served as an educational consultant in the Office for Religious Education and was editor in chief for the ethnic communications outlet. He lectured at numerous universities and colleges around the country and was a regularly featured columnist in Catechist Magazine, where he wrote about the cultural implications of Catholic pastoral and catechetical ministries.56

Jones died in 1994. At the 2014 IBCS commencement, Sister Eva Regina Martin remembered how Jones had articulated that the “cultural gifts of African Americans, with their sense of imagination, emotion, dialogue, aesthetic nuances, and a certain playfulness, can be contrasted with the often analytical, philosophically-oriented discourse of mainline theology and pastoral practice. For Nathan, a catechist should not pump religion into people, but draw religion out of the people. He did this by dancing and singing the spirituals, the gospels, and the blues as he delivered his lectures. He also challenged, questioned, and rebuked us. For Nathan, you had to get right, do right, be right, and live

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.
right. He constantly taught that the aesthetic had to be the core of one’s teaching and learning.”

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<tr>
<th>Sister Eva Marie Lumas, S.S.S., D.Min.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sister Eva Marie is a Sister of Social Service in Los Angeles. In addition to her Th.M. earned through the IBCS at Xavier, she earned a D. Min. from Howard University. Her primary area of teaching competency is Africentric liturgical catechesis. Presently she is Cultural Competency Trainer at St. Mary’s Center in Oakland, California, and served as both Assistant Professor of Faith and Culture and Director of Field Education at the Franciscan School of Theology in Berkley, California, from 1994 until June 2015. She has served as a Catechetical Consultant for the Archdioceses of Los Angeles and Oakland and was the founder and director of Blood Ties, a Christian education and resource center for the Black community. In Tanzania, she had conducted a workshop on racism in ministry for the Maryknoll sisters. Her experience as a catechist has made her a popular presenter on topics of faith and culture, interculturalism, catechist formation, and catechist methodology. Lumas is the Associate Director of C &amp; E programs at the IBCS, as well as serving as an Adjunct Professor of Catechesis and Pastoral Studies.</td>
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57 Sister Eva Martin, July 2013, IBCS 2011-2015, XULA Archives and Special Collections.

Rev. Joseph R. (Roy Clarence) Nearon, Ph.D.

Rev. Joseph R. Nearon was 52 years old at the inception of the Institute for Black Catholic Studies. Born in Yonkers, New York, he entered the Blessed Sacrament Order at age 22. At age 26, he left the United States in order to study abroad and traveled extensively; after five years he attained his licentiate in theology and was ordained. Two years after his ordination, Nearon began studies at the Gregorian University in Rome at a time of profound theological change. His education corresponded to an era that heralded opportunities not only for liturgical inculturation but also for a more substantive exposition of racism within the Church.  

In 1961, Nearon began to teach theology at John Carroll University in Cleveland Heights, Ohio, where he came to chair the department and initiate the Master Program in Religious Studies. He aimed to professionalize the study of theology stating, “The function of people in religious education is to be witnesses who appeal to the freedom of the hearers. Sending a religious to teach religion just because he or she is a religious is like sending someone to teach biology just because they are breathing.” His idea for a Master’s program focused on community formation rather than a Socratic methodology.

It was reported that Nearon was never happier than when he taught theology at St. Paul’s Major Seminary in Moldavia, Liberia, West Africa, after which he worked to create a


synthesis of African and Christian values. From all accounts, Nearon was sociable, had a
great sense of humor, personified ministry, and demonstrated a pure love of teaching. In
February 1981, Dr. Francis asked Nearon to join the Xavier theology department where his
“teaching ability, experience, and insights for development of an appropriate theology
curriculum were needed.”

Nearon died in 1984 while Director of the IBCS. Bishop James P. Lyke, O.F.M., Nearon’s
former professor and religious superior, and his colleague in the department of Religious
Studies at John Carroll University for 12 years, presided at his funeral Mass. In his homily,
Bishop Lyke praised Nearon’s gifts of mind and heart and expressed the idea that Nearon
gave “his total response to anyone’s call for his presence.” Lyke referred to Nearon as a
“person’s priest” and “celebrant’s celebrant,” always bringing the religious element into all
celebrations. Nearon loved people and felt no need for commercial entertainment of any
kind- he told stories in a uniquely dramatic way, sometimes with an accent that would have
“us all roaring with laughter.” He loved a party, but on the other hand, Lyke commented, “I

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felt he could live for days on bread and water alone and never give it a second thought.”

Underneath his joking and merriment was “that commitment, that dedication that came with his ordination.” Among his contributions to the Church, Bishop Lyke named defining the task of Black Theology and co-founding the IBCS with Rev. Thaddeus Posey.  

64 Ibid.  

65 Ibid.
Sister Jamie T. Phelps, O.P., Ph.D.

Sister Jamie Therese Phelps, the youngest daughter of the late Alfred J. and Emma Brown Phelps, was raised in a family where politics and religion were a common dinner table topic and each of the six children were expected to contribute to the conversation regardless of age. Hard work was an expectation as well as knowledge of world events and appreciation of the arts. The Phelps children were taught that whatever gifts they had were given by God for the good of the community.\textsuperscript{66}

Sister Jamie was born in Pritchard, Alabama, and was raised in Chicago, where her family was one of the first Black families to live on the West Side, and in the 1940s, the second Black family to attend St. Matthew’s School in a predominantly Irish and Italian parish. Adrian Dominican nuns staffed the school and Phelps’ experience with the sisters led her to join the order immediately after high school in 1959. She entered despite the trepidations of both the congregation’s leadership and her parents concerning the situation of a Black woman in a white order. Sister Jamie, nonetheless, has remained an Adrian Dominican sister for 57 years, a reality that confirms the evangelizing power of urban Catholic education and which explains her enduring concern for the closing of city parochial schools.\textsuperscript{67}

Sister Jamie earned a BA in Sociology with minors in Science and Mathematics at Siena Heights College in Adrian, Michigan, and an M.S.W. at the University of Illinois at Chicago, an M.A. in Scripture and Systematic Theology at St. John’s University, Collegeville, and in 1989,


\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.
a doctoral degree in Systematic Theology at the Catholic University of America. Her experience of service in the Catholic Church, particularly in ministry to Black Catholics, was vast even prior to her profession as a theologian. Sister Jamie had taught every grade from first through graduate school and was a psychiatric social worker for over a decade. She had developed liturgical programming, administrated and taught religious education, and collaborated in parish ministry. After earning her Ph.D. in 1989, Sister Jamie taught at the Catholic Theological Union and Loyola University. She has lectured extensively and written over 50 articles published in scholarly journals in such areas as ecclesiology, evangelization, social justice, inculturation, and communion.68

Sister Jamie has written a good deal about African American Catholics and Black Catholic theology. She has edited a major resource for Black Catholicism: *Black and Catholic: The Challenge and Gift of Black Folk* and co-edited another with Cyprian Davis: “*Stamped with the Image of God*: African Americans as God’s Image in Black.” In terms of organizational work, Sister Jamie was a founding member of the National Black Catholic Sisters Conference in 1968, the founding director of the Augustus Tolton Pastoral Ministry Program in 1990 and, in 1991, she re-convened the third Black Catholic Theological Symposium, a critical think-tank for Black Catholic theologians.

Sister Jamie’s enduring association with the IBCS began while she was still a graduate student, and delivered a paper at the first Black Catholic Theology Symposium in 1978, which was the event at which the reality of the Institute took root. She was subsequently consulted on the proposal that requested an Institute for Black Catholic Studies and was

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then named to the consultant group for the fledgling Institute. Sister Jamie has been associated with the IBCS ever since, as she has served as a seminar speaker, faculty member, faculty representative on the Board of Directors and Policy Committee, Associate Director for Degree Programs, as well as the Director of the Institute from 2003-2011.69

### Rev. Thaddeus Posey

Rev. Thaddeus Posey, Ph.D., a native of Washington DC, was one of the founding conveners of the Black Catholic Theological Society and served on both the formation and consulting committees for the IBCS. Posey was only 36 years old at the time he became the first Associate Director of the IBCS, and he was connected with the Institute until 1991; this detail of his youthful involvement corresponds to his becoming the founding chairperson for the National Black Catholic Clergy Conference in 1968 as a 24 year old seminarian. Posey was ordained in 1974 after earning a M.A. in Religious Education from Capuchin College in Washington.70

Born into a military family, Posey eventually served 30 years in the chaplaincy department of the US Army and retired in 2007 as a full colonel. In 1993, he earned a doctorate in historical theology from St. Louis University. Posey taught theology at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota, from 1993-2006, and concurrently presented teaching eight annual extension courses in Ghana on 20th Century African Spirituality. Additionally, Posey served as a guidance counselor, chaplain, and teacher at a variety of high schools and

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parishes in Colorado and Missouri. Father Posey died in 2013 after a long battle with cancer.  

**Rev. Clarence Joseph Rufus Rivers, Ph.D.**

Like Bishop Anderson, Rev. Clarence Joseph Rufus Rivers, Ph.D., was born in Selma, Alabama, to a non-Catholic family. When Rivers was nine years old, his family moved to Cincinnati where he entered St. Ann's School and, eventually, the entire family converted to Catholicism. After discerning a vocation in high school, Rivers was ordained in 1956 and became the first African American priest in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. He quickly encountered the reality of racism when his parishioners refused to accept him. Following his transfer to St. Joseph Parish, the young priest sought a way to promote more active congregational participation in the liturgy. This prompted Rivers to develop and record, in 1963, “An American Mass Program,” which was a series of compositions blending rhythmic and melodic elements of the Negro spirituals with Gregorian chant.

The success of “An American Mass Program” helped spark a liturgical music revolution in American Catholicism. Rivers was the preeminent pioneer in bringing the gifts of the African American expression to life in the Roman Catholic liturgy. He paved the way for liturgical inculturation and inspired Black Catholics to bring their artistic genius to Catholic worship. In 1964, Rivers led the singing for the first official high Mass in English in the United States at the National Liturgical Conference in St. Louis, and the Communion song, “God is Love,” was his first musical composition for liturgy. Witnesses measured the song’s

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impact with comments such as “it had the assembly standing and applauding for ten minutes,” and “electricity filled the air when Father Rivers stepped up to the microphone and sang...The American Catholic Church will never be the same.”

In 1968, Rivers started *Stimuli, Inc.* a center for liturgical arts, design, and publication in order to foster a greater synthesis between African American cultural expressions and traditional European American worship services. Rivers’ two publications, *The Spirit in Worship* and *Soul Worship*, are seminal texts that examined worship through the lens of African American cultural frames. His recording of “Mass for the Brotherhood of Man” gave musical footing to the efforts of those struggling to be Black and Catholic. It is through him that many churches with a majority of Black parishioners began to dance, sing, vest, and preach in ways familiar to their cultural and spiritual hearts.

River’s academic achievements were also impressive and included an MA in philosophy from the Athenaeum of Ohio, graduate studies in English literature at Xavier University in Cincinnati and Yale, as well as studies in speech and drama at the Catholic University of America, and in liturgy at the Institute Catholique in Paris. He earned a doctorate in black culture and religion from the Union Institute and University, then known as Union Graduate School, in Cincinnati. In 1971, while head of the National Office of Black Catholic’s newly created Department of Culture and Worship, he initiated an annual workshop on African – American liturgy called “Freeing the Spirit.” Rivers’ music was performed by the Cincinnati

73 Ibid.

Symphony orchestra and was featured on CBS. He made numerous television appearances, including the narration of an ABC civil rights documentary entitled “We Shall Be Heard.” Rivers died suddenly in 2004. In a tribute written by Jesuit novice, Eric T. Styles, Rivers was described as a man full of life with an impeccable sense of style and a collection of Converse All-Stars that was unparalleled. “He always referred to people as “Your Grace” and told them that they were deserving of such a title because they were ‘peers in the realm of God and co-Heirs with the Christ!’ He was never afraid to shock, cajole, embarrass, or sweet-talk a congregation into singing and had an insatiable appetite for grand pomp and ceremony. He loved African American culture and he loved the Church even when it so often painfully seemed as if it did not love him.” After his death, Bishop Wilton Gregory commented that through his music, Father Rivers “brought the Church closer to African-Americans while at the same time enriching the Catholic Church with a spiritual vibrancy and artistic expression that crossed all racial barriers.”

Mother Elesia Shynes

Mother Shynes graduated from the IBCS IMANI Master Catechist program in 1983 and then joined the Institute staff; she taught in the Spiritual Enrichment program until 2007. A woman of great faith, Shynes extended herself formally and informally in service to IBCS. She excelled as a cantor, and a minister of the Word at Mass; her moaned rendition of the responsorial psalm was a signature. Shynes held a B.S. in Clinical Nursing from Tuskegee University, and graduated from the Philadelphia College of the Bible at Temple University.

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75 Styles, “Clarence Rufus Joseph Rivers.”

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid.
and the Word Program in the Church Ministry Program of St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia.

She had been a Director of Religious Education and taught religion in a parish school. Shynes had retired from Federal Civil Service and was actively involved in several community, civil, religious boards, and organizations. She organized a National Women's prayer group, “Power of Prayer,” that spread to 22 states. It was attested that she preached the Word in word, action, and attitude. Mother Shynes died in 2011 in Philadelphia and she remains profoundly missed by the entire IBCS community.78

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<th>Most Rev. James Terry Steib, S.V.D.</th>
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<td>Father Steib served on the founding committee of the IBCS. Steib had worked along his father in the sugar cane fields of Louisiana where he was first inspired to become a priest. He remembered a time in Vacherie, Louisiana, when African American children could not be altar servers. At an early age, through the influence of the Sisters of Mercy of the Cross, Steib began to consider the priesthood as a way to help people transform their lives. After graduating from the Divine Word Seminary in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, he was ordained to the priesthood in 1967. He taught at St. Stanislaus High School, St. Louis, Missouri, from 1967-1976 while he continued his studies in Guidance and Counseling at Xavier University, Louisiana, earning an M.A. in 1973. On February 10, 1984, Steib was ordained Auxiliary Bishop for the Archdiocese of St. Louis, and in 1993 he was installed as the fourth Bishop of</td>
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\textbf{Sister Francesca Thompson, Ph.D.}

Sister Francesca Thompson was a member of the founding committee of the IBCS. She was raised in Indianapolis, and was known for her ability to preach, her love of theater, and especially her dedication to her students. Her parents were the founding members of the Lafayette players in 1915. Her mother died when Sister Francesca was only 7 months old and, therefore, her father and her grandmother raised her. Her grandmother was a Democratic ward captain and, consequently, young Francesca enjoyed a unique exposure to the city’s politicians, clergymen, and judges because they visited her home. Her father’s friends included such entertainment luminaries as Paul Robeson, Ruby Dee, and Eubie Blake.\footnote{“Religion Makers: Sister Francesca Thompson,” \textit{The History Makers: The Nation’s Largest African American Video Oral History Collection} (October 3, 2006), \url{www.thehistorymakers.com} (accessed March 12, 2016).
}

Sister Francesca was raised in the AME church but became attracted to Catholicism while attending St. Mary’s Academy, which was the only private secondary school in Indianapolis that would accept African Americans at that time. Won over by the ritual and drama of the Catholic faith, Thompson joined the Sisters of St. Francis of Odenburg, Indiana, in 1952. She earned an M.A. degree in education from Xavier University and a Ph.D. in speech and drama from the University of Michigan. She coached several budding actors while at the University of Michigan, including Gilda Radner and Christine Lahti. Sister Francesca became the
chairperson of the Drama and Speech department at Marian College, where she taught from 1966-1982. In 1982, she began a 24-year association with Fordham University, where she served as an associate professor of African and African American Studies and assistant dean/director for Multicultural programs.\textsuperscript{81}

**Sister Addie L. Walker, S.S.N.D., Ph.D.**

Sister Addie is currently the director of the Sankofa\textsuperscript{82} Institute for African American Pastoral Leadership at the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. She is also an Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology at the Oblate School. Sister Addie is a native of Austin, Texas, and entered the School Sisters of Notre Dame in 1977, and professed vows in 1980. After earning a Th.M. from IBCS through Xavier, Sister Addie received a doctorate in Religion and Education from Boston College. She has taught high school and college as well as having served in pastoral ministry and religious education programs in Lafayette and New Orleans, Louisiana.\textsuperscript{83}

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{82} Sankofa is a Twi word, from the language of the Akan people of West Africa, meaning “it is not taboo to go back and fetch what you forgot,”\textsuperscript{82} i.e., the importance of knowing one’s roots in order to move forward. “Sankofa Institute for African American Pastoral Leadership,” *Oblate School of Theology*, http://www.ost.edu/OblateSite/Sankofainstitute/sankofa_main.html (accessed August 1, 2015).

Appendix Three
IBCS Graduates Who Earned Terminal Degrees

| In 2004, degree student alumni information was reported as follows: |
| Ten degree students, all African Americans and one Jamaican, have pursued doctorates in the areas of African American Studies, Theology, Religious Education, or Pastoral Ministry, and two more were applying that year. |

| Doctors and doctoral candidates who had graduated from the Institute were: |
| • Sister Eva Regina Martin S.S.F., Ph.D. in African Studies, Temple University; |
| • Sister Addie Lorraine Walker, Ph.D. in Religious Education, Boston College; |
| • Sister Barbara Spears S.N.J.M., Ed.D. in Education; (report did not indicate school). |
| • Rev. Don Chambers, Ph.D. Candidate in Systematic Theology, Gregorian University Rome; |
| • Sister LaReine Moseley, S.S.N.D., Ph.D. Candidate in Systematic Theology, Notre Dame University; |
| • Reverend Maurice Nutt, D. Min. in Preaching, Aquinas Institute; |
| • Sister Eva Lumas, S.S.S., D. Min. in Religious Education, Howard University; |
| • Kathleen Dorsey Bellow D. Min. in Liturgy, Catholic Theological Union; |
| • Reverend Freddy Washington, D. Min, in Pastoral Ministry, University of Dayton; and |
| • C. Vanessa White, D. Min., Candidate in Spirituality, Catholic Theological Union. |

| Two were applying for doctorate programs: |
| • Reverend Derran Combs, O.F.A.M., Ph.D. Religious Studies, Fordham; Black Theology at University of Birmingham, England; and |
• Willa Golden Ph.D., Religious Studies, Boston College.

Reverend Thaddeus Posey has also completed his doctorate in Historical Theology.


Cheri, Fernand J. Homily, Commencement at the Institute of Black Catholic Studies, New Orleans, Louisiana, July 17, 2015.


“The Role of the Black Catholic Theologian and Scholar in Today’s Context.” Address, BCTS Symposium, Atlanta, Georgia, October 8, 2009, 57-80.


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“Daniel Rudd Explains the Proposed Congress of Black Catholics, 1888.” In Stamped with the Image of God: African Americans as God’s Image in Black, edited by


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Turner, Brian T, Department of Psychology Faculty Director, XULA. www.xula.edu (accessed November 28, 2015).


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