



## Office for Black Catholics ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA



May, 2021 Newsletter



*The circles of women around us  
Weave invisible nets of love that carry us  
When we are weak and sing with us  
When we are strong*

Sark

### ON THE ROAD TO SAINTHOOD



Julia Greeley's charity was so great that only God knows its extent. She was constantly visiting the poor and giving them assistance from her own slender means. When she found their needs so great that she could not help them with her own goods, she begged for them. Her charity was as delicate as it was great. She realized that white people, no matter how poor, might feel a little sensitive in receiving assistance from an old colored woman, so she went at night to their homes to deliver the goods she had begged, in order to keep the neighbors from seeing her. She had even been seen going thru the streets at night with a mattress on her back. Many times she was seen carrying coal and groceries. Yet she was so poor herself that the city charity department had been furnishing her with fuel and groceries. She was known for pulling a red wagon through the streets of Denver.

**For more information on the life of Julia Greeley  
visit the website at: [juliagreeley.org](http://juliagreeley.org)**



In his apostolic letter, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* (RVM), St. John Paul II tells how we are to assimilate the mysteries of the rosary by meditating on the life of Jesus as we contemplate each mystery. When we immerse ourselves into the mysteries of the Holy Rosary, and we are rewarded by the "fruits" of the mysteries listed below:

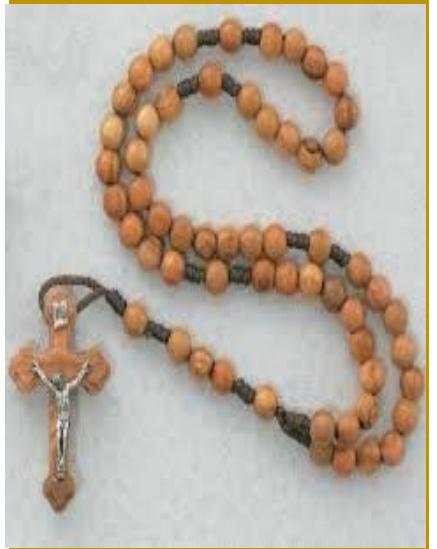
#### **Joyful Mysteries:**

Annunciation: humility;  
Visitation: love of neighbor;  
Birth of Jesus: detachment;  
Presentation: obedience;  
Finding in the Temple: greater commitment & devotion to Jesus.



#### **Sorrowful Mysteries:**

Agony in the Garden: trust in God;  
Scourging at the Pillar: purity;  
Crowning with Thorns: fortitude;  
Carrying of the Cross: perseverance in trials;  
Crucifixion: forgiveness for others.



#### **Luminous Mysteries:**

Baptism: openness to the Holy Spirit;  
Miracle at Cana: Mary's intercession;  
Proclamation of the Kingdom & Repentance: Christian witness and conversion;  
Transfiguration: courage to bear the cross;  
Institution of the Holy Eucharist: greater love for the Eucharist.



#### **Glorious Mysteries:**

Resurrection: faith;  
Ascension: hope;  
Descent of the Holy Spirit: gifts of the Holy Spirit;  
Assumption: To Jesus through Mary;  
Coronation: final perseverance.

# In the Spotlight



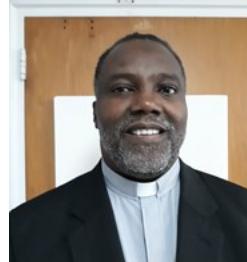
## Saint Athanasius Parish



Rev. Joseph F. Okonski, Pastor



Rev. Anayo Nna, C.S.S.R.



Deacon James Mahoney



Deacon Fred Poellnitz  
Retired

Saint Athanasius Parish was founded in 1927 and Saint Benedict Parish in 1922. Both were founded to bring Jesus Christ in Word, Sacrament, and Deed to the people of their respective neighborhoods. In 2013, the parishes were merged into one, Saint Athanasius Parish. We are proud to say that in 2021, despite the merger and pandemic, by the Grace of God and the faith and commitment of His people, the Mission is alive and well. Our parish is made up of Saint Athanasius and Saint Benedict Churches and St. A's Catholic Elementary School. Our school prides itself in offering state of the art technology which afforded our parents the option of in person or virtual learning due to the Covid-19 pandemic. At this time, approximately 62% of our students are in person for 5 days a week of instruction. Our school remains the only Archdiocesan parish elementary school that serves a majority African American population. Saint Benedict food pantry serves approximately 100 families a week.

The pantry has remained open and serving families throughout the pandemic. Our community partners include Guiding Star Ministry, which is a home for pregnant women and children in crisis. It is housed in the former St. Benedict Rectory and operated by the Pro-Life Union. St. Joseph House, a residence for 24 college students facing housing insecurity, is housed in the former St. A's convent. We are also blessed with the Knights and Ladies of Peter Claver at both Churches and the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

As of today, our parish is safely returning to in person worship and we continue to live stream. Technology has been a huge blessing to so many of the homebound. On our YouTube channel, **Saint Athanasius Philadelphia**, we live stream Sunday Mass at 10 AM and daily Mass at 9 AM. Evening Litany and Benediction are streamed daily at 6 PM as well. Our Bible study is held on Wednesdays at 7 PM via Zoom. For more information about our parish, please visit our website <http://www.stathanasiuschurch.us/> or call us at 215-548-2700.

Reverend Joseph F. Okonski, Pastor, . In Residence, Reverend Francis P. Foley, CAPT, CHC, USN, retired. Permanent Deacons Mr. James Mahoney, Mr. Fred Poellnitz, retired.



2050 East Walnut Lane, 19138

Rev. Francis P. Foley, CAPT, CHC, USN  
Retired

# TAKING IT TO THE STREETS



## FINAL BLESSING

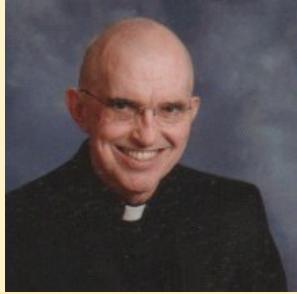


What better way to end a mass when the pastor, Father Stephen Thorne of Saint Martin de Porres Church, “in the kingdom of North Philadelphia” than to have the final blessing take place outside of the church. We are in a time when we need to step out of our comfort zone and witness to the entire community that there is still hope in knowing that God is still in charge. In these times of racial unrest, gun violence, covid-19, whose privileged and not privileged, we have to stand up for what is right if we are going to make a difference. We have to walk the walk and talk the talk so that we can embrace one another spiritually and lift up all those who are standing in the need of prayer.

Taking it to the streets means we have to stretch beyond our limitations and challenge one another to speak truth and to take action. If not you, then who? We need each other to survive. Let us all be about making a difference. Let us be about truth and justice. Let us be about knowing who we are and whose we are as children of God. Let us comfort one another. Let us be about having an attitude of gratitude. Our faith journey is our story. Let us take our stories to the streets and stand up, stand out, and stand strong. Let us give witness and share the good news of knowing that nothing is impossible with God.



## Institute For Black Catholic Studies Xavier University, LA



### *An Experience That I Will Never Forget*

The Institute for Black Catholic Studies is a great program for everyone because it opens one's eyes and heart to the giftedness of Black Catholics in this country. I attended the Institute, which is held at Xavier University in Louisiana, for five summers about 30 years ago, but its lessons continue to resonate in my heart and spirit. As a white priest moving into ministry in the Black Catholic Community, it helped me to look at life, at ministry, and at theology with a different lens.

The courses were awesome because they gave me a different perspective, but the experience itself was priceless. Learning and experiencing life from a caring African American Catholic perspective helped me, as a priest, to experience culture as sacred to people and as a way to express deeply rooted spiritual realities. It helped me to realize how important it is for white priests to listen and embrace the heartbeat of the Black Community of Faith in order to serve in the Black Catholic Community. Yes, I learned theology, but more importantly I was stretched culturally by the staff, teachers and participants. The Institute offers many programs to help pastorally, but the experience of "Living" the program is what stays with you forever.

This program helps a minister (lay or clerical) to become sensitive to the giftedness and worship styles of the Black Catholic Community, but most importantly it opens one's heart to other cultures. I have advocated with my religious order that all men (seminarians and formators) should attend the Institute for Black Catholic Studies. I would strongly recommend this program to all seminarians and to anyone, white or black, seeking to minister in the Black Catholic Community.

All of us, Black or white, have been trained in White European Tradition. Our Church must be a Big Church because our God is a Big God. The experience of the Institute for Black Catholic Studies helps us all to understand that God is truly a God of all peoples and cultures. If you go, I assure you "It will be an experience that you will never forget!"

**Father Sy Peterka, C.M.**



# KEEP THE SISTERS' LEGACY ALIVE

## SISTERS OF SELMA Bearing Witness for Change



A group of American nuns, including Avila's founders the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, defied authority and marched on Selma, Alabama in 1965 in support of providing voting rights for all. Inspired by the movement created by Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., these women spoke on behalf of the silenced when many church leaders were reluctant to address the treatment of Blacks in the United States. The image of these women of the cloth, marching alongside

other protestors, seared the country's collective consciousness and became a turning point in the fight for equality.

The PBS documentary, *Sisters of Selma: Bearing Witness for Change*, is a powerful retelling of the nuns' courage and dedication in serving the dear neighbor. It has become an invaluable resource in educating future generations about the sacrifice and triumphs of these women and their contribution to social justice work in American society. We need to ensure it continues to be shared across the globe.

## WHY NOW?

Featured prominently in the documentary is contemporary footage of the Selma marches which had to be licensed from several news networks and must be renewed in 2021. Avila University seeks to purchase the licensing rights in order to make this documentary available in perpetuity and to share freely. In light of the growing calls for racial accountability and reckoning within the Catholic church and in all aspects of American life, *Sisters of Selma* is needed more than ever.

### Your support will help:

- Ensure ongoing access to stream the film for students, teachers, scholars, and the general public
- Document the role of the Catholic sisters' participation in social justice work and Catholic Social Teaching
- Create a digital humanities project entitled *Catholic Sisters and Social Justice since Vatican II* and interactive educational website

### HELP IS NEEDED

In order to permanently purchase the rights to the *Sisters of Selma* video content, we need to raise \$75,000.

## HOW YOU CAN TAKE ACTION:

Consider a gift today to help us share the sisters' legacy.

1. Give at [Avila.edu/Sisters](http://Avila.edu/Sisters)
2. Make a gift directly to:  
Avila University  
11901 Wornall Road  
Kansas City, MO, 64145  
Designate: *Sisters of Selma*

For additional information, contact:  
Carol Coburn, Ph.D.  
Director of the CSJ Center for Heritage  
816-501-3713 or  
[carol.coburn@avila.edu](mailto:carol.coburn@avila.edu)

YOUR GIFT TODAY IS AN INVESTMENT IN SAFEGUARDING THE SISTERS' LEGACY AND THEIR MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE UNITED STATES.

*Dare to Understand.*

*Dare to Serve.*

*A Virtual Event Honoring Local and National Heroes and Leaders*



**Dr. Anthony Fauci**

**Director of the National Institute of Allergy  
and Infectious Diseases**



**Dr. Ala Stanford**

**Founder of the Black Doctors  
Covid-19 Consortium**

Join Interfaith Philadelphia to reflect on and mark an unprecedented season of faith in the face of fear, as we begin to emerge out of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Interfaith Philadelphia builds bridges between people and communities to create a more just and equitable society. Dr. Ala Stanford and Dr. Anthony Fauci, our 2021 Dare to Understand awardees, offered steady, trusted leadership at the local and national level, shepherding us through a public health crisis, with integrity and equity. Throughout the pandemic, they valued faith communities as vital to the fabric of our society. We, the interfaith community of Greater Philadelphia, are honored to recognize their leadership.

Our event will lift up stories of frontline workers from all sectors—many hidden from public view—who have dared to serve. We will look back and acknowledge the toll of illness, loss and care-giving, and honor the sacrifice, service, and faith on the frontline. We will look ahead to ways that Interfaith Philadelphia, together with diverse community partners, will continue to heal, serve, and re-build thriving, beloved communities.

Let's gather for a community ritual, mark this profound season, to remember the year that has passed, and to gaze forth to imagine a future we must build together.

**Reserve Your Tickets**

**[www.interfaithphiladelphia.org/tickets](http://www.interfaithphiladelphia.org/tickets)**