#### THE NATIONAL BLACK CATHOLIC CONGRESS

### **CONGRESS IX**

August 29 – September 1, 2002 Chicago, Illinois

# THE NATIONAL BLACK CATHOLIC CONGRESS DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES AND PASTORAL PLAN OF ACTION

September 1, 2002

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Board of Trustees of the National Black Catholic Congress approved the theme and focus of Congress IX, to be held in Chicago, Illinois on August 29 - September 1, 2002. The focus of the Congress is centered around the theme "Black Catholic Leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Solidarity in Action." During the planning stages for Congress IX, it was concluded that the National Black Catholic Congress would develop a Declaration of Principles and a National Black Catholic Pastoral Plan of Action.

As Black Catholics in assembly at Congress IX, we are aware that we are called by God and empowered by the Spirit to walk the Way of Jesus and to proclaim as He did, the Good News of the Kingdom of God in Word and Deed. The words of Pope Paul VI continue to inspire us and bring us hope... "then you will be able to remain sincerely African even in your own interpretation of the Christian life; you will be capable to formulate Catholicism in terms congenial to your own culture; you will be capable of bringing to the Catholic Church the precious and original contribution of "blackness", which she needs particularly in the historic hour."

Black Catholics are called to embody for others the healing presence of God's unconditional love and to establish justice as we seek to live in patterns of the right relationships in a world challenged by human evil and sin. These social sins are manifested in the alienating interpersonal and structural patterns of relationship, which characterize our nation and world.

It is in that spirit that we proclaim this Declaration of Principles. It is a declaration that follows the mandate of Church law, which prescribes that the faithful make an effort to promote growth and sanctification within the Church (Canon 210) and to spread the message of salvation outside the Church (Canon 211). Indeed, Canon law teaches that we have both a right and a duty to manifest principles, which pertain to the good of the Church (Canon 212).

Conscious of the need for the ongoing evangelization and inculturation of the Church in the Black Catholic Community in the United States, we Black Catholics, responsive to the "sign of the times" in our community wish to identify eight areas of

concern and guiding principles for directing our collective ministries as we move forward from this first National Black Catholic Congress of the twenty-first century. We find in our hearts and minds concern about the problems confronting us in the areas of Spirituality, Parish Life, Youth and Young Adults, Catholic Education, Social Justice, Racism, Africa and HIV/AIDS.

This is not an exhaustive list but rather a list of concerns that presently challenge and call Black Catholics and the whole American Catholic Church to action. In the spirit of collegiality and subsidiarity initiated at the Second Vatican nearly fifty years ago, we challenge Black Catholic Bishops, Priests, Deacons, Religious Women and Men, Lay ecclesial Ministers and laity to take leadership in implementing these principles in collaboration with one another and with all of the United States Catholic Bishops, Catholics, and people of faith. In turn, we invite our United States Catholic Bishops, priests, religious men and women, lay ecclesial ministers, lay Catholics and people of all faiths to join us in our endeavor to be co-workers and subjects of the Mission of Jesus Christ in today's world.

We hope that these issues and principles might be discussed in the local beauty parlor, barbershop, family gatherings, community meetings and church assemblies — much as the early Christian community discussed the religious and social-political issues of their day. The cultural divide has blinded many parts of our society to the importance of these issues' particular impact on the well being and life of all Black Americans and other peoples of African descent living in the United States. We pray that the eyes of all those whom we call brother and sister within the Household of the Catholic Faith will be open to the "joys and hope, the griefs and anguish" of Black Americans and other people of African descent in the United States, especially those who are poor and afflicted in any way." (Adapted from Gaudim ET Spes, 1)

There is much to be said about each of these selected eight areas. However, these are the principles:

- 1) **Spirituality** Inasmuch as all people are called to a life of holiness, we as a black people faithful to the Holy Spirit and our church's teachings, must seek to pray and work in the spirit of our ancestors in the Faith.
- 2) **Parish Life** Black Catholics must assume greater responsibility for the welfare of the parish community to which they belong; and the Church must provide the resources and opportunities for them to contribute and develop their talents and leadership for the good of the entire church.

- 3) Youth and Young Adults Black youths and young adults who hunger for intimacy, community and spirituality need the Catholic Church to engage them in social justice activities and programs that promote their spiritual maturity in a way that is relevant to their culture.
- 4) **Catholic Education -** Catholic Education continues to be one of the best means of evangelization and social justice in the Black community. Efforts must be made to create and expand religiously sound and academically effective Catholic primary and secondary schools in the Black Communities of our nations.
- 5) **Social Justice** Black Catholics, as heirs of a rich faith-based tradition of concerns for justice, must become more knowledgeable about the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and use this teaching to evaluate their economic, political and social decisions and the policies of their communities.
- 6) **Racism** Racism, which continues to be prevalent in our society and in our Church, must become a primary concern for all U.S. Catholics.
- 7) **Africa** As members of a world Church, Black Catholics and all U.S. Catholics must work for justice and exercise compassionate love to our brothers and sisters who are suffering in Africa.
- 8) **HIV/AIDS** Since HIV/AIDS is one of the most devastating diseases confronting the African and African American Community, Black Catholics and other Catholics in the United States must engage in efforts to assist in the research, treatment, education and elimination of this disease.

We ask the Saints, especially St. Josephine Bakhita and St. Martin de Porres to intercede for us. The memories of these Saints inspire us because of their profound humility, universal love, tremendous faith and undaunted hope. St. Josephine Bakhita is a beacon of hope as indicated by her council to "Trust in God. If you do so, you treat Him truly as God!" St. Martin de Porres is a model of humility who like Christ did not find any state too lowly from which to lanch our human journey towards the salvation and liberation of humankind. His word's echo in our hearts and minds as we encounter the poor in our midst. "In the house of God there is no position that is low, however humble it may seem to be." We trust that God will bless our humble attempts to show love for all God's People.

#### The National Black Catholic Congress Pastoral Plan of Action

The National Black Catholic Congress Pastoral Plan of Action is a set of action steps, which follow each of the Principles contained in the Declaration of Principles. In effect, these action steps are to be responses to the Principles. They are to be commitments on the part of each of us and our Church to respond to the needs expressed in the Declaration of Principles. Plans call for concrete Actions within one year, for Actions within three years and for Action within five years. The Pastoral Plan of Action addresses the urgent need to translate the objectives of the Declaration of Principles into a practical and workable program of Action at all levels of the Church serving persons of African descent.

#### 1. SPIRITUALITY

Principle: Inasmuch as all people are called to a life of holiness, we as black people faithful to the grace of the Holy Spirit must seek to pray and work in the spirit of our ancestors in the Faith.

The African American Catholic Community finds it roots in the spiritual tradition of the Early Church in North Africa with Cyprian, Augustine, and the monastic traditions of Moses the Black and the men and women in the Egyptian desert and in Ethiopia. The suffering of slavery helped form this spirituality of the descendants of Africa in Latin America, Spanish Florida, French Louisiana, the Maryland Colony. This spirituality with its devotion to Mary, its Afro-French and Afro-Latin songs, and it rootedness in the Bible came from a black people whom the Catholic Church nourished but did not always acknowledge.

Black Catholics are a people of prayer, a prayer that is at the same time ecstatic and joy filled on certain occasions, contemplative and intimate on others. In the same tradition black Catholics have expressed their spirituality through service and the demands of justice. St. Martin de Porres nurtured and nourished the poor and the infirm of 16<sup>th</sup> century Lima. Pierre Toussaint witnessed to the compassion of Christ in his daily life and worked towards all who sought his aid as he walked the streets of the 19<sup>th</sup> century New York. Llewellyn Scott walked with King for justice in 1968 and walk the Streets of the Nation's capitol for forty years to bring the consolation of Christ to homeless and rootless men, especially black men. Two centuries ago, Elizabeth Lange and Henriette Delille established congregations of black religious women whose task of healing, nursing, teaching, and sheltering washed the feet of Christ in serving the children and aged among the black poor and neglected.

Today the gift of our blackness to the Church has been recognized by the raising of Africans and the descendants of Africans to our altars. The canonization of St. Josephine Bakhita recalls the nobility and charity of a woman who was enslaved as a girl but who lived without bitterness a hidden life of service and hospitality. The beautification of Blessed Victoria Rasoamanarivo in 19<sup>th</sup> century Madagascar, single-handedly kept the Church alive in a time of persecution by using her position as a relative of the royal family and by the outpour of her prayers. The torture and death of many young people like the twenty-two martyrs of Uganda in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the two Congolese servants of God, Blessed Isidore Bakanja and Blessed Anwarite Nangapeta, in the last century remind us that like gold tested in the fire these young women and men witnessed to the power of the cross in their respective countries. Today within the black community many men and women, both old and young, continue to show forth the same love of Christ in their love for each other and in their care for all in need.

#### II. PARISH LIFE

Principle: Black Catholics must assume greater responsibility for the welfare of the parish communities to which they belong and the Church must provide the resources and opportunities for them to contribute and develop their talents and leadership for the good of the entire Church.

For Catholics of African descent in America, the parish remains the central place where the faith community gathers and worships. The composition of the parishes to which Black Catholics belong varies greatly. In some, we are the majority of the parish membership. In others, we are part of a diverse multicultural and multiethnic faith community. In many cases, Black Catholics are a small fraction of the total population. Whether our numbers are large or few, in whatever parish setting we find ourselves, Black Catholics have both the privilege and the duty to take an active part in parish life. We do so in response to the summons of Pope Paul VI and of our African American Bishops to "enrich the Church with our gifts of blackness" (cited by the African American Bishops in their pastoral letter, What We Have Seen and Heard.)

The unique needs and expectations that Black Catholics have of parish life flow from our distinctive social and religious experience in the United States.

Because we have often been the recipients of the Church's missionary concern, we now look for the parish to provide opportunities for adult leadership development and faith formation. In a particular way, we call upon parishes and dioceses to nurture Black Catholics in programs of lay ministry and leadership. In this way, we will be empowered to assume increasing responsibility for the welfare of the Church-a responsibility that is ours by virtue of baptism.

Because we are Catholics in a land where many Black people are not Catholic, we look for the parish to be a place that celebrates both Black cultural heritage and our instinctive Catholic tradition. Specifically, we urge our parishes to nourish us in a sacramental vision of life. We urge parishes to give sacramental catechesis-especially programs of Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation, and R.I.C.A. preparation-a priority place in the service they offer. We also urge parish leaders to continue to develop sacramental and ritual practices that are both "authentically black and truly Catholic." (cf. Plenty Good Room).

Because persons of African descent are often victims of discrimination and injustice in society, we look to our parishes to make clear the connection between our Sunday worship and our responsibility to society. Specifically, we encourage parishes to

continue and further develop programs of social charity and outreach for the poor. But we also call upon homilists, catechists, and parish leadership to address the systemic causes of injustices in light of our heritage of Catholic social teaching. (cf. Communities of Salt and Light).

Finally, because persons of African descent often live and worship in areas ravaged by violence and economic distress, we look to our parishes to be oases of hope in the midst of despair. We urge our faith communities to be places of joy. This joy is not an escape or denial of the harsh realities that confront us. Rather, it is a witness to the power of Christ's resurrection, and to the love of God form which nothing can separate us. (cf. Romans 8:35-39).

#### III. YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

Principle: Black youths and young adults who hunger for intimacy, community and spirituality need the Catholic Church to engage them in social justice activities, and programs that promotes their spiritual maturity in a way that is relevant to their culture.

"One of our dreams is to be supported and encouraged by the Church to carry out the commitment to our chosen vocation. We hope the Church can incorporate the contributions of Black Catholics into the Church's history...and abolish the notion of Blacks as new to Catholicism. We are eager to meet the challenges through assuming leadership roles, religious education, and actions of justice and peace." (Henri M. Barnwell, Virginia Beach, VA)

Black youths and young adults thrill themselves on the aesthetic traditions of hiphop, dress, art, dance, music, and call to worship. Each parish should realize that the youth and young adults thrive on the aesthetics. This is one door we must use to enter their world. They possess an enthusiasm for all that Black culture has to offer. Young adults can teach us how to enter another culture from the heart and minister to the elderly and other adults with greater enthusiasm, and feel aesthetically comfortable in doing so. They tend to hang things together better than their parents.

Amidst the façade and glitter of their environment, young adults are drawn to the spiritual realms, holiness of life, and seeking to know God. They have an innate sense of the transcendent; God is awesome to them. Young adults also hunger for intimacy and community. "They seek the reign of God through service projects, spirituality and works of justice." The tend to be more involved with social justice issues, and seek ways to connect with the poor.

Critical areas which young adults would like to see the Catholic Church address and become more involved include such activities as curbing violence, addressing unstable home situations, drug prevention, hunger, better schools, and ministry to youth and young adults in jail. They also think the Church should address issues of poverty, social injustices, personal worth, values of groups or individuals being assaulted on a systemic and daily basis, respect for dignity of the human person, the common good of all, and programs to enable them to discern what right path to take in journeying in life, and spiritual transforming liturgies.

Black young adults are a powerful potential for the Church. We are at a critical moment that the Church cannot afford to miss, even though most of young adults are inclined to be on the periphery of the Church. They tend to be more vocal and straightforward with answers as to how they see the future Church. They ask questions

and want straight answers. Their world is a mixture of bringing God into the equation, as well as excluding God when misunderstanding surfaces.

Collaboration with various Church organizations, diocesan offices, offices of Black Ministries, catechetical programs, diocesan programs and institutions, and political agencies can lead to useful and transforming ministry to the young adults. Involving young adults in projects such as social services programs, reflection on themes of Catholic Social Teachings, and Project Rachael are very engaging to them. Young adults see religious vocations in terms of deep spiritual life, serving the poor and giving witness to social justices issues, even though they find commitment a challenging quest. Parish life should "enable youths to embrace the mission of Christ to promote the building of the kingdom of God thereby bringing about the transformation of the society." There should be a discerning house in each diocese located in a parish for young adults. For young adults, "religious life must continuously be re-enfleshed in ways that speak to a changed and changing world. Last but not least, young adults should be connected to elders in the parish. What holds promise is the seniors are "keys of grace" that can open the doors for young adults to reenter and feel at home in the Church.

#### IV. CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Principle: Catholic education continues to be one of the best means of evangelization and social justice in the Black community. Efforts must be made to create and expand religiously sound and academically effective Catholic primary and secondary schools in the Black Communities of our nation.

American Catholic education was initiated to preserve and protect the <u>faith and culture</u> of the economically poor immigrant Catholics in the hostile anti-Catholic ethos of bigotry and discrimination of the Nineteenth Century. Today, Black Catholics desire to preserve their black <u>culture</u> and protect and expand their Catholic <u>faith</u> in a social ethos of racial and cultural domination, discrimination and double (social and ecclesial) marginalization. Catholic schools in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, responded not only to the educational needs of children and to immigrants families but functioned as instruments of parish life in the evangelization and Christian formation of the community. Black Catholic leaders at the second and third Black Catholic Congresses convened in the Nineteenth Century decried the lack of availability of Catholic education as a major priority for Black Catholics. In the first half of the twentieth century, the evangelization of Blacks in urban centers and semi-rural areas of the nations was mediated primarily by the Catholic school systems.

Alarmed by the increasing number of Catholic Schools closing in the Black community, we are mindful of the Gospel injunction to teach all people (Matthew 28:19). It is imperative that we maintain viable Catholic schools in the Black Community. Catholic schools in the Black community are needed: 1) to provide an integrated education rooted in religious values and academic excellence as a foundation for a viable life; 2) to continue the legacy of the school in the Black community as an instrument of Catholic evangelization and; 3) to continue the church's mission of social and racial justice among Black and the urban poor.

Although a proportionately small number of black children have access to Catholic schools, the effect of Catholic schools has been invaluable. Many Catholic and non-Catholic black leaders in all walks of life attest to the Catholic school's impact of their ability to fulfill their vocation as laity in the secular world (Lumen Gentium, 31). The development of their skills and character in our schools has not only been a matter of personal gain but as also allowed them to focus the use of their talents for the benefit of the wider community as well as our church.

Religious congregations of men and women are encouraged to establish or recommit themselves to provide educational institutions for the education of Black children, teens, and young adults. All faculties and staff in Catholic schools in the Black Community are encouraged to enhance their knowledge of Catholicism through: 1) study of Catholic theology and history; 2) study of the Black Catholic history, culture and spirituality and 3) participation in the life and religious education program of the parishes. Such study and participation will enhance their ability to assist in the church's inculturation in the Black Community and to maintain authentically Black and truly Catholic schools, where religious values and academic excellence are characteristics.

Black Catholics are urged to join with other Catholic leaders to collaborate in the creative financing of primary and secondary Catholic schools in the Black community. Efforts to seek grants for Catholic education in the Black community and to establish scholarship and campus ministry programs for Black Catholics attending Catholic primary, secondary, and colleges should be encouraged.

In addition to our concern for Catholic schools, there is an important and urgent need to strengthen our Religious Education Programs at the Parish level. This approach is important for our young people as well as adults and programs must be designed to strengthen our people spiritually during their preparation and at the proper time they will receive the sacraments fruitfully.

#### V. SOCIAL JUSTICE

Principle: Black Catholics, as heirs of a rich faith-based tradition of concern for justice, must become more knowledgeable about the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and use this teaching to evaluate their economic, political, and social decisions and the policies of their communities.

Catholics of African descent in America approach questions of social life in light of two complementary traditions; the great heritage of Catholic Social Teaching, and the historic black church's constant involvement in matters related to black social progress and the welfare of society.

The historic black preacher often made the connection between social life and religious faith by appealing to the biblical prophets, especially using the words of the prophets. Amos: "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24). This concern for social justice is echoed by the Catholic Church's declaration: "Actions on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel" (1971 Synod of Bishops, Justice in the World). Black Catholics, then, see no divorce between our religious faith and the promotion of justice in society.

At the core of Catholic and black reflection on social life is the conviction that all women and men, without exception, are children of God who possess intrinsic dignity, value and worth. The dignity of the human person-regardless of race, religion, class, gender, or other human distinction-must be respected, promoted, and defended. Social, political, and economic programs exist to serve people, not the other way around. We agree with our bishops who teach that all social policies and programs must be evaluated in light of three questions: What do they do to people? What do they do for people? What do they enable people to do for themselves? The dignity of the human person, especially that of the poor and the vulnerable, is the fundamental criterion for determining the presence or absence of justice in society. **Cf. Economic Justice for All, 1, 24, 28, 32.** 

As persons of African descent living in America, our experience makes us acutely aware of the patterns of political exclusion, economic division, cultural marginalization still present in American life. We well know that all too many Americans encounter obstacles to their right to vote; wonder where their next meal is coming from; choose between buying shoes or clothes for their children; work overtime at wages that cannot provide for a family; have inadequate access to quality legal representation; have little or no medical insurance; worry about the quality of their children's education; fear for the safety of their neighborhoods; live in conditions of squalor and neglect. For us, such people are not statistics. They are our friends and neighbors; they are our parents, children, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

We declare that is an intolerable scandal that people anywhere—but especially in the United States—must live in such conditions of social abandonment and indifference. In fact, we make our own the stirring words of U.S. Bishops who declare: "No one may claim the name of Christian and be comfortable in the face of the hunger, homelessness, insecurity, and injustice found in this country and the world" (Economics Justice for All, 27). Moreover, it is a scandal that in our nation, poor children and children of color suffer the cruelest consequences of our nation's moral callousness.

Thus we Catholics of African descent in America re-commit ourselves to our people's historic struggle for justice. We especially advocate programs that will ensure equality of social participation and economic opportunity for <u>all</u>, especially for those who are the considered by many to be the least among us. We pledge ourselves to work with others of good will in promoting the cause of justice.

#### VI. RACISM

Principle: Racism, which continues to be prevalent in our society and in our Church, must become a primary concern for all US Catholics.

We affirm the definition of the US Catholic Bishops; "Racism is the sin that say some human beings are inherently superior and others essentially inferior because of race. It is the sin that makes racial characteristics the determining factor for the exercise of human rights. "Brothers and Sisters to Us, page 3). Racism in America is based on the belief of racial superiority and remains an evil and a source of division within the human family and the community of faith. It creates vastly different perceptions among groups. It creates suspicion, distrust and fear between neighbors and within communities, even communities of faith. Through its members, the Church has more often than not complied with rather than challenged racial attitudes and behavior. As a result of this, racism has created distrust between the Catholic Church and the Black community.

The US Catholic Bishops urged "consideration of the evil of racism as it exists in the local Church and reflection upon the means of combating it" as well as "scrupulous attention at every level to insure that minority representation goes beyond mere tokenism and involves authentic sharing in responsibility and decision making." (Ibid., page 11) Five years later in 1984, the US Black Bishops declared that these words had not had a full impact on the US Catholic Church. They said: "This racism, at once subtle and masked, still festers within our Church as within our society. It is this racism that in our minds remains the major impediment to evangelization within our community." (What We Have Seen and Heard, page 20). They further explained: "Blacks and other minorities still remain absent from many aspects of Catholic life and are only meagerly represented on the decision-making level." (Ibid). We declare that this is still the reality in the beginning of the new millennium.

Racism has a singularly destructive effect in the United States, one of the most interracial nations of the world. Racial profiling, police brutality, injustice in the administration of the law and justice, poverty, inequities in education, health care and employment are all manifestations of racism. These are the legacies of the enduring effects of slavery and racial discrimination.

Black Catholics believe that the Church must never cease to challenge its faithful to eliminate from their hearts and lives all forms of discrimination and bigotry based on race, culture, or ethnic differences. Black Catholics are committed to help the Church provide opportunities and resources, which address inequity, discrimination and exclusion in all forms and at all levels in the Church.

#### VII. AFRICA

Principle: As members of a world Church, Black Catholics and all U.S. Catholics must work for justice and exercise compassionate love to our brothers and sisters who are suffering in Africa.

Anthropologists generally agree that Ancient Africa was the birthplace of the human race. Africa has gifted the world community with her musical rhythms, spirituality, and creative genius for centuries. The Church in north Africa was the center of Christianity and through the centuries has gifted us with three Popes and several theologians, among them, Tertullian, Cyprian, Origen, and Augustine and saints too numerous to identify.

The growth of the Catholic Church throughout sub-Saharan Africa in the twentieth century has been astonishing. She is now firmly rooted in the African soil, and hers sons and daughters, courageous witnesses, are founding new religious communities of men and women. Vocations are flourishing and parish life shows a vitality, which reflects vibrant faith and burning love. Many African priests as well as women and men religious are studying and serving as missionaries in the United States. African laity are contributing their gifts to the Catholic Church in the United States and to our nation.

Despite these glories both ancient and new, Africa is currently a land of destitution, where millions of innocent people suffer misery and want. Such a situation is partly the result of the Atlantic Slave trade and colonial exploitation; it is exacerbated by the current world monetary order and its various Structural Adjustment Programs. Increasingly, though, African leaders and citizens are assuming responsibility for their role in perpetuating such dreadful conditions.

The continent is over-ridden with ethnic violence and war; corruption, both private and official, is too widespread. Periodic droughts and famine join hands with the social disorientation to create situations or abject poverty. The whole area of the continent is ravaged by disease, notable malaria and HIV/AIDS.

The experience of democratic institutions remains both recent and tenuous in many African countries; conflict between groups leads to political instability in many places. The efforts of many leaders and people of good will to establish the rule of law and a just and equitable system are yielding fruits, which hopefully will gradually transform the situation.

Black Catholics in the United States, as members of the Body of Christ know that "If one part is hurt, all the parts share its pain" (1 Cor 12:26). We must therefore respond with greater urgency to the current plight of our kinsmen and women in Africa. We urge greater

collaboration with the efforts of Africans to transform their situation on the continent and to create channels for deeper understanding and effective dialogue between Africans on the Continent and all Catholics in the United States.

We applaud the U.S. Catholic Bishops statement "A Call to Solidarity with Africa" and encourage them to continue to focus greater attention on the needs of the people of Africa as they include them among their priorities. May we join together to support and become more involved in the peacemaking efforts on the continent, and include the various programs to eliminate peacemaking efforts on the continent, and in the various programs to eliminate poverty, disease, and economic debt.

#### VIII. HIV/AIDS

Principles: Since HIV/AIDS is one of the most devastating diseases confronting the African and African American Community, Black Catholics in the United States must engage in efforts to assist in the research, treatment, education and elimination of this disease.

The unfortunate scourge of HIV/AIDS in the United States affects disproportionately the poor and African American men, women and children. In 1998 the Center for Disease Control and Prevention HIV/AIDS statistics documented that HIV/AIDS was the leading cause of death for Black men between the ages of 25 and 44 and the third leading cause of death for black women. More recent newspaper reports suggest the largest increase in AIDS cases is among Black women. In many countries of Africa, half of the young adult population, male and female is infected. As this disease continues to spread, it will eventually diminish already fragile standards of living within entire countries, lead to a depopulation of nations and, it is feared, cause widespread social disruption. The Catholic Church is in a position to morally influence the formation of the community values and to reach those most marginalized in societies and nations populated by her sons and daughters who are Black and of African descent. In Africa, the Church historically has been in the forefront of health care and care for the poor.

We urge all Catholics and all people of good will to respond with compassion and mercy to persons and families affected by this disease. We urge the Church in general and Black Catholic Parishes in particular to challenge its membership to reach out with compassion to its victims and their families helping them to overcome hurt, anger and discouragement and to continue to discover how God's love lives within them. We urge the church and employers to provide as much as possible a means of livelihood for those who are ill and cannot support themselves. In a similar vein, we urge the Church to use its moral and economic influence to urge pharmaceutical companies and the international government bodies to make HIV/AIDS medicines economically available to the poor in Africa, the United States and throughout the world.

HIV/AIDS is contracted by sexual contact, use of unclean needles used for legal and illegal drugs, mother to child interchange of fluids before and during birth and breast feeding, and contact with infected blood, breast milk, and bodily fluids. We therefore urge young, middle aged and older people who are single to live chaste lives and married couples to remain faithful to their marriage partners. We urge everyone to abstain from illegal drugs and the use of unclean needles. A chaste life, each partner living a monogamous marriage, a life free of illegal drugs and the use of clean needles in medical situations are the only effective morally accepted preventatives to contracting this tragic disease.

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#### **SECTION II**

# CONGRESS IX PASTORAL PLAN OF ACTION

"I urge you, brothers [and sisters], in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree in what you say, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same purpose."

1Corinthians1:10 NAB

"Praise the Lord in his sanctuary,
praise him in the firmament of his strength.
Praise him for his mighty deeds,
praise him for his sovereign majesty.
Praise him with the blast of the trumpet,
praise him with lyre and harp,
Praise him with timbrel and dance.
Praise him with sounding cymbals.
Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Alleluia."
Psalm 150 NAB

#### PRINCIPLE: SPIRITUALITY

#### Within a Year to Plant the Seed

- Identify and incorporate cultural symbols, language and experiences in parishliturgies.
- Initiate parish-based Scripture study programs from an Africentric perspective for all age groups.
- Begin development of educational/formation programs or manuals based on the spiritual values of the lives of Black Saints.
- Promote and support the interest and response of Black women and men desiring to dedicate their lives to various aspects of Church ministry.

#### Within Three Years to Nurture Growth

- Implement conferences and workshops addressing African American liturgy and spirituality.
- Develop and distribute Africentric prayer services and liturgies for parish use.
- Collect and acquire resources on Black history and spirituality for a diocesan level lending library.
- Identify writers and a format for publication of a Black Catholic newspaper that includes inspiring information about the gifts and talents of Black people and the Black religious experience, as well as their contributions to the Church in the world.
- Develop parish and arch/diocesan lecture series or seminars that teach about the contributions and history of Black Catholics in the Church.

- Plan and establish a National Black Catholic Institute for Liturgy patterned on the schema of the Institute for Black Catholic Studies at Xavier University in New Orleans, LA. to:
  - train parish liturgical ministers on the nature, style, and elements of Africentric celebrations.
  - focus on creative approaches to sacramental ministry toward peoples of African descent.
- Create/establish a National Black Research Institute (in partnership with the National Black Catholic Congress and other national organizations of Black Catholic leadership) to:

- identify resources and maintain a current national database of resource speakers, facilitators, teachers, and other experts who can be called upon to assist parishes and dioceses in ministerial development and program implementation for peoples of African descent.

commission the publication of a well-researched and inspirational manual on

the lives of Black Saints.

- collect and disseminate information on Black Catholic interests and concerns (spirituality, canonizations, social and cultural demographics, poverty, etc.)

#### "As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace." 1Peter 4:10 NAB

#### PRINCIPLE: PARISH LIFE

#### Within a Year to Plant the Seed

- Identify the gifts and talents of parishioners and develop plans to affirm them on the parish level.
- Form needed parish ministries, train for them and communicate a clear definition of the ministries to the larger Church.
- Design workshops or parish town meetings that educate parishioners on daily parish operations to foster parish ownership.
- Incorporate into parish celebrations the affirmation of community and parish leadership and accomplishments (retirements, graduations, anniversaries, awards, etc.) of its members.
- Establish evangelization as a vital ministry in the life of a parish and institute outreach efforts to address the needs of the members and the local community.
- Establish a parish budget to continue the support of Black Catholics involved in leadership roles on the parish and diocesan level for seminars, workshops, or undergraduate/graduate studies (e.g. Institute for Black Catholic Studies).

#### Within Three Years to Nurture Growth

- Identify and/or begin the formation of formal leadership programs for various roles of parish lay leadership.
- Develop and engage arch/diocesan resources and support of Black Catholic leadership through skill workshops and professional training/formation.
- Provide local and/or national educational opportunities and sensitivity training to priests, deacons and vowed religious serving in Black Catholic communities.
- Identify ways and means of financial support for formal parish leadership training programs.

- Evaluate increased participation, recognition of and involvement of Black Catholics in parish and diocesan activities and leadership.
- Implement a diocesan Africentric vocational campaign that addresses all levels of ministry.
- Using newsletters, the web, resource clearinghouses, or other networking techniques, develop parish-to-parish sharing initiatives that promote maintaining and strengthening Black Catholic parishes in the community.

"Likewise, you younger members, be subject to the presbyters.

And all of you, clothe yourself with humility in your dealings with one another, for:

'God opposes the proud but bestows favor on the humble.'

So humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God,

that he may exult you in due time."

2Peter 5:5-7 NAB

#### PRINCIPLE: YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

#### Within a Year to Plant the Seed

• Identify ways to involve youth and young adults in parish leadership roles and increase involvement in liturgies, e.g. lectors, Eucharistic ministers, choir members, greeters, etc.

• Provide visual cultural experiences so that youth and young adults can embrace and

be inspired by their history.

• Establish a mentoring program for youth and young adults to enhance their roles of active participation in the church.

• Conduct year round activities to train, encourage, and evangelize youth.

• Investigate ways to implement home-to-college mentoring programs to extend parish contact for students away at school.

#### Within Three Year to Nurture Growth

• Design and implement spiritual and financial programs that identify and encourage more Black youth to discern the call to the priesthood and vowed religious life.

• Create a network of parishes and resources for parish collaboration, networking for

contact, cultural experiences and leadership development.

• Hire a full time youth minister or a youth minister that can be shared by a cluster of participating parishes.

Develop a mentoring program with Black role models.

#### Within Five Years to Establish Roots

• Establish, sponsor and/or collaborate with other churches to open a Street Ministry Program to handle referrals, handout food, teach and spread the Gospel message to Black youth and young adults.

• Foster and provide Catholic campus ministry outreach at Black colleges and

universities.

Establish "Rites of Passage Programs" for both boys and girls ages 15-18.

• Involve young adults in all aspects of Black Catholic ministry: advisory boards, and planning team for diocesan young adult gatherings.

"All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that one who belongs to God may be competent, equipped for every good work."

2Timothy 3:16-17 NAB

#### PRINCIPLE: CATHOLIC EDUCATION

#### Within a Year to Plant the Seed

- Identify and implement programs for educators in Catholic schools that develop their understanding of the basic tenets of the Catholic faith.
- Infuse Black Catholic history into the Catholic school curriculum to instill Black Catholic pride in our children, our families, and our communities.
- Investigate and develop, on the parish and diocesan level, new and creative ways to provide financial assistance for Black Catholic schools.
- Identify parishioners serving in leadership roles in religious education and support their formal training as DRE's.
- Heighten the Bishops' awareness of Black Catholic schools in the diocese to elicit their support.

#### Within Three Years to Nurture Growth

- Locate and/or establish grants and scholarships to support Black educators in their roles as teachers and administrators for religious education programming.
- Implement education programs that promote unity within the Black community.
- Create a database of alumni for Black Catholic schools to build an Alumni Directory that can be used to highlight Black Catholic school successes.
- Train and hire DRE's to serve a parish or one to share by a group of parishes.
- Develop Africentric resources for parish-based religious education programming.

- Develop creative incentives for parental, parish, and business involvement in order to insure a sound academic program and curriculum for Black Catholic schools.
- Recruit, hire, and maintain adequate/competent administration and staff that supports an effective Black Catholic school program.
- Publish a list of active Catholic school alumni for the encouragement of volunteers, financial support, and public relations.
- Collaborate with Catholic leaders in the creation of multi-generational religious education programming.
- Encourage publishers to develop programs, textbooks, and materials that are culturally sensitive, historically correct, and based on Sacred Scripture.

"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 the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord." Luke 4:18-19 NAB

#### PRINCIPLE: SOCIAL JUSTICE

#### Within a Year to Plant the Seed

- Initiate parish-based meetings to identify the social, economic and political needs of the parish community and ministerial ways to address them.
- Conduct workshops to familiarize parishioners and train outreach ministers on Catholic Social Teaching.
- Highlight social justice issues within all Sunday liturgies, as well liturgies for special feasts and other unique times, e.g. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday, feast day of St. Martin de Porres.
- Identify and initiate community contacts that advocate for social justice issues within the parish and broader community.

#### Within Three Years to Nurture Growth

- Develop and implement a comprehensive social justice training program that connects Catholic Social Teaching with Sacred Scripture.
- Create parish social justice ministries that work to inform and address issues of social justice.
- Access State Catholic Conference network of resources for parish lay leadership working to address social, economic, educational and political issues.
- Initiate parish-based programs that provide services to alleviate poverty, underemployment, lack of education and skill development.

- Mobilize Black Catholics to support the 2007 Voting Rights Act amendments.
- Establish organizational ties with other Church, community and government agencies that advocate for solutions to social justice issues relevant to Catholic Social Teaching.
- Identify and implement partnerships between wealthy parish families and poorer parish families to stimulate investment in the broader community.

"For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jew or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit."

1Corinthians 12:13 NAB

#### PRINCIPLE: RACISM

#### Within a Year to Plant the Seed

- Initiate and publish a parish-based survey that identifies racial issues affecting parishioners and their communities.
- Develop a forum for discussion with Bishops and parish leadership the issues of race, racial tensions and its social, economic, educational and political implications.
- Define racial discrimination in terms of interaction within an increasingly diverse racial population and design programs that advocate problem-solving measures.

#### Within Three Years to Nurture Growth

- Develop programming that addresses understanding and interaction with diverse racial groups.
- Ask the U.S. Catholic Bishops to revisit the pastoral letters on race and up-date them in terms of present racial realities.
- Engage Bishops, their staffs and parish leaders in a forum to revisit the Diocesan Church's response to identified racial issues.
- Develop strategies that involve all ethnic groups in discussions to eliminate racism at the parish and diocesan level.

- Establish programs that foster dialogue and interaction among racial and ethnic groups.
- Publish annual report cards that evaluate diocesan response to racial issues.
- Design strategies to increase Black leadership on diocesan boards and other Church institutions.

"God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit proclaiming the gospel of his Son, that I remember you constantly, always asking in my prayers that somehow by God's will I may at last find my clear way to come to you.

For I long to see you,

that I may share some spiritual gift so that you may be strengthened, that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by one another's faith, yours and mine." Romans 1:9-12 NA

#### PRINCIPLE: AFRICA

#### Within a Year to Plant the Seed

- Develop materials and resources on African history, culture, politics, African saints, martyrs and popes, and Africa's contributions to the Church to educate Catholics in general, but specifically directed toward Black Catholics. Resource materials should include a series of homilies based on "A Call to Solidarity With Africa" and suggestions for planning Africentric liturgies and celebrations.
- Designate a week focusing on Africa to be celebrated in parishes and schools.
- Initiate prayer services; liturgical services; projects such as collecting school supplies for African schools; the establishment of partnerships with African support groups; educational opportunities; displaying African artifacts in the church/school.
- Designate a national collection to support the Church in Africa.
- Establish a multigenerational network of parishioners with an interest in Africa to create a parish ministry or social action committee for African Affairs. This ministry would include responsibility for outreach to African immigrants and developing partnerships with other related interest groups.
- Encourage U.S. Bishops to support Africans through the work of CRS' Africa Rising, Hope and Healing campaign.

#### Within three Years to Nurture Growth

- Develop curriculum guidelines, teaching materials and educational resources to be used in Catholic schools and religious education programs.
- Develop and implement programs to assist African immigrants and refugees.
- Encourage humanitarian assistance to the people of Africa that includes material resources, recruitment of teachers, medical personnel and other experts.
- Develop partner relationships with African dioceses, parishes, Church organizations and/or villages and towns, and for that purpose host African Bishops as well as encourage U.S. Bishops to visit Africa.
- Examine and monitor existing policy toward Africa.

- Promote African tourism by coordinating pilgrimages to Africa.
- Advocate for legislation that addresses debt reduction, disease, poverty, and conflict
- Advocate for legislation and persuade pharmaceutical companies to set up research and manufacturing plants in Africa to combat HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases.

"Go up to Gilead, and take balm,
O virgin daughter Egypt!
No use to multiply remedies; for you there is no cure."

Jeremiah 45:11 NAB

"Sometimes I feel discouraged, and think
my work's in vain,
But then the Holy Spirit revives my soul
again.
There is a balm in Gilead to heal the
wounded soul.
There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin
sick soul."
A Negro Spiritual

#### PRINCIPLE: HIV/AIDS

#### Within a Year to Plant the Seed

- Incorporate prayer and homilies that acknowledge the HIV/AIDS pandemic, including the prayer of the faithful and celebrating established days of prayer (e.g. World AIDS Day, Black Church Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS, AIDS Awareness Week).
- Establish HIV/AIDS ministries in all parishes.
- Provide educational opportunities for parish staffs, schools, parishioners and the local community, with emphasis on parenting education and HIV/AIDS awareness for youth.
- Establish ties with existing HIV/AIDS ministries at diocesan, local city, state and national levels.
- Create a system whereby parishioners can support funding for programs being established for HIV/AIDS ministries.

#### Within Three Years to Nurture Growth

- Design diocesan-wide HIV/AIDS Days of Prayer.
- Develop a Black Catholic fund to support HIV/AIDS ministries in the United States and in Africa.
- Advocate with elected officials and pharmaceutical companies for their support of HIV/AIDS research funding.

- Create a network of parish ministries and existing community resources to address educational, financial and social supports for the prevention of HIV/AIDS.
- Establish comprehensive parish-based youth programs that address the dissemination of information, behavior modification and follow-up for HIV/AIDS related issues.
- Evaluate and up-date programming, ministries and resources to address changes in the development of HIV/AIDS.

- Increase the effort of institutions, businesses and professionals to implement exchange programs with African and U.S. colleges and assistant programs, e.g. U.S. Jesuit colleges with African colleges.
- Provide opportunities for dialogue between American Catholics and African Catholics, e.g. adopt African families in Africa and in the U.S. and provide support.
- Utilize Diocesan Offices of Black Catholics for continuing solidarity and support to African immigrants and development projects in Africa.

# APPENDIX PASTORAL PLAN OF ACTION NATIONAL BLACK CATHOLIC CONGRESS IX

#### **Voting Rights Act of 2007**

The Department of Justice has received numerous inquiries concerning a rumor that has been intermittently circulating around the nation for many months. According to this rumor, the Voting Rights Act will expire in 2007, and as a result, African Americans are in danger of losing the right to vote in that year. THIS RUMOR IS COMPLETELY FALSE

#### **The MESSAGE**

African Americans are not going to lose their right to vote in the year 2007 when certain provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 expire.

There are, unfortunately, some states that have proven records of still trying to use official means to discourage ethnic minority Americans from registering and voting. Unless this changes, we will need to rally ourselves to put pressure on Congress in 2007 to extend the "extraordinary remedies" provisions.

The 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which was enacted just after the civil war, guarantee all African Americans the right to vote. The 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment does not expire!

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed to supplement the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment; it further guarantee that no federal, state or local government shall in any way impede or discourage people from registering to vote or voting because of their race or color. The anti-discrimination provisions of the Voting Rights Act are also permanent and not subject to an expiration date. If you have any questions, call Hilary Shelton at the Washington Bureau of the NAACP at (202) 638-2269

#### Use of "Black People" versus African American

For the purpose of this document, the National Black Catholic Congress determined to use "Black people" when referring to people of Black America and of the African Diaspora except when it is a part of a title. This reveals the multifaceted, international cultural experiences of people of African descent.

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS PASTORAL PLAN OF ACTION NATIONAL BLACK CATHOLIC CONGRESS IX

#### CRS - Catholic Relief Services

Catholic Relief Services was founded in 1943 by the Catholic Bishops of the United States to assist the poor and disadvantaged outside the country.

Catechist – a fully initiated, practicing Catholic, at least 18 years of age, who has been invited to share in the catechetical ministry of the Church

Catholic Social Teaching – The Scripture-based principles, which direct our Christian response to one another found in Jesus' proclamation of the fulfillment of Sacred Scripture: "The Spirit of the Lord has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor... liberty to captives... freedom to the oppressed... recovery of sight to the blind." Luke 4:18-19

DRE - Director of Religious Education

a professionally trained pastoral minister who leads and oversees a catechetical program in a paris

IBCS - Institute for Black Catholic Studies

Founded in 1980, the Institute for Black Catholic Studies (IBCS) of Xavier University of Louisiana offers programs in pastoral ministries, religious education and pastoral theology taught from the perspective of the Christian faith expressed in the Black religious community.

**OBM – Office of Black Ministry** 

a diocesan level office with the responsibility to respond to the ministerial needs of African American Catholics and the evangelization of African Americans to the Catholic Church

**National Collection** 

Identifies with a specific mission of the Universal Church, and to the particular mission that the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops establishes for a collection from the Church in the United States.

#### **State Catholic Conference**

The conference seeks to fulfill the vision of the Vatican Council II, which called on the Church to be more involved in the world, and the call of Pope John Paul II in Centesimus Annus for Catholics to become personally involved in and committed to transforming the public policy process to better serve the needy and vulnerable. Takes positions on public policies and programs affecting the common good of all citizens and the interests of Catholics.

Youth Minister – a faith leader who is engaged in the dynamic process of leading youth to a maturity of faith while at the same time comes to a deeper experience of their own faith.

#### **Voting Rights Act**

The 15<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Constitution and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 prohibit racial discrimination in voting. Under the 15<sup>th</sup> amendment and the Voting Rights Act no one may be denied the right to vote because of his or her race or color.