

November 3, 2019

TOLTON: FROM SLAVE TO PRIEST

"*TOLTON: FROM SLAVE TO PRIEST*", the powerful live production performed by actor Jim Coleman and directed by well-known Leonardo Defilippis of Saint Luke Productions, will be presented in our own Father Martin Hall at 6:30 pm THIS SUNDAY NOVEMBER 3 . Some of you thought this was going to be another movie. NO! It is going to be a LIVE PERFORMANCE. When was last time you went to a theater to see a live play? This time you do not have to go all the way to the Kennedy Center downtown, the performers are coming to us at OLHOC!!! And it is FREE!

I invite all of you to come and meet Fr. Augustus TOLTON, the first African American priest, in this one-man multi-media performance. From his dramatic escape from slavery to his courageous struggle in the face of prejudice, Fr. TOLTON's inspiring life centers around his message of reconciliation and hope. This riveting drama is filled with all the elements of professional theater, runs 75 minutes, and is suitable for AGES 10 AND UP. We hope that many of our teenagers and youth will also be able to attend. Bring your entire family or friends. Admission will be a free will offering. For additional information, contact our office (301-645-7112) or visit www.olhoc.org/tolton

As part of our celebrating our 40 years, we are delighted to have this amazing live performance in our parish. Traditionally, November is the Month of Black Catholic History. As you know, in addition to "meeting Fr. TOLTON in early November", we will also have the opportunity to celebrate with Bishop Roy Campbell our Black Catholic Heritage on Sunday November 17 (11:30 am Mass followed by reception and historical presentation of several Black Saints).

In the last three weeks, I have learned much about Fr. TOLTON. I just finished reading two books about him: "From Slave to Priest" by Sr. Caroline Hemesath, O.S.F., published in 1973 and "Father Augustus TOLTON ", by Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers just published last year (2018). What has impressed me personally is the direct connections I could see between Fr. TOLTON and Fr. MARTIN. They served as parish pastors in the United States at about the same time: Fr. TOLTON from 1886 (his year of ordination in Rome) through 1897 (when he

died at the young age of 43), Fr. MARTIN from 1894 through 1923 (died at age 77). As contemporaries in parishes dealing essentially with African Americans, they faced many similar challenges of evangelization. These challenges are the same ones we face today in Waldorf, where the African American population has grown rapidly in the last 20 years or so.

Another connection between those two priests, is their heroic virtue of "Zeal for Souls". In the case of Fr. TOLTON, that heroic virtue of being a tireless messenger of the Gospel, the Good News, has just been recognized by Pope Francis when he made him a Servant of God on June 12, 2019. As you know, we initiated last July the process of canonization of Father Martin last July and we hope that in the not too distant future, he can be also declared a Servant of God.

Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers in his book "Father Augustus TOLTON" , reminds us that " Fr. TOLTON understood that God is active in the Scriptures and that, especially in the Mass. HE wants to feed and nourish us with HIS WORD...There is no doubt that the long-suffering TOLTON family relied on God's word to bring comfort in difficult times and that the PSALMS served as a source of HOPE and CONSOLATION ." All of us face challenges within our families or in the workplace or at school. Reflecting on the life of Fr. TOLTON , we too can find hope and consolation in the Psalms. With trust And confidence in the Lord, Let us pray together for FORGIVENESS and GUIDANCE from Psalm 25 (1-2,4-5, 17-18):

*"I wait for you, O LORD;
I lift up my soul to my GOD.
In YOU I TRUST.
Make known to me YOUR WAYS, LORD;
Teach me YOUR PATHS.
RELIEVE THE TROUBLES OF MY HEART;
Bring me out of my distress.
Put an end to my affliction and suffering;
Take away all my sins."*

One in Christ,
Father Alain