

November 10, 2019

## UNITY IN DIVERSITY: ONE IN CHRIST

Looking back on our 40 years of parish history, we can say that while we have become more and more DIVERSE, we have remained UNITED: ONE IN CHRIST! Like many of you, who came last Sunday to watch the play TOLTON (the Father Martin Hall was packed with over 200 participants), I was reminded that the challenges of diversity can be overcome and that we can remain united ONE IN CHRIST. These are the own words of Father TOLTON. We use these very words of unity at OLHOC. Our own motto includes "BEING ONE IN CHRIST". I end every letter with those three words: ONE IN CHRIST. These are not just words. They do have a deep meaning. We are truly united in Christ through the EUCHARIST! We are united because all of us are brothers and sisters, having the SAME FATHER IN HEAVEN: GOD!

In his book of reflections on Father Augustus TOLTON, Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers writes about "THE CHURCH FOR ALL PEOPLE": "*Fr TOLTON never wavered from the Church, despite enduring the cross of a lifetime of racial animosity... He was able to discern that what the Catholic Church teaches is TRUE, good and beautiful despite the hypocrisy and contradiction of Church members who do not LIVE the FAITH they profess. Fr. TOLTON always acknowledged the GREAT GIFT of his CATHOLIC FAITH, and recognized that sin and weakness are not greater or more powerful than the strength of objective truth found in Catholicism. Fr. TOLTON was a visionary who saw far beyond issues of race and politics, looking inward into the heart of the Church Herself... May we come to a deeper understanding that the distinct charisms and rich cultural heritage of Catholics throughout the world are rooted in a covenant relationship with God- a relationship that transcends all races and colors. IT IS CHRIST WHO BINDS US TOGETHER AND MAKES US ONE IN HIM.*"

In her book "From Slave to Priest- The inspirational Story of Father Augustine TOLTON (1854-1897)", Sister Caroline Hemesath, O.S.F., quotes Fr. TOLTON: "*The Catholic Church*

*deplores a double slavery, that of the mind and that of the body. I was a poor slave boy, but the priests of the Church did not disdain me. It was through the influence of one of them that I became what I am... It was the priests of the Church who taught me to PRAY AND FORGIVE my persecutors... The Church which knows and makes no distinction in race and color calls us all... In this Church we do not have to fight for our rights because we are black... The Church is broad and generous. SHE IS THE CHURCH FOR OUR PEOPLE."*

We were blessed to have this amazing live performance of Fr. TOLTON in our own Fr. MARTIN Hall. We took pictures of Fr. TOLTON in front of the painting of Fr. Martin. Both served as parish pastors in predominantly African-American churches at about the same time. Fr. TOLTON was recognized by Pope Francis as a Servant of God last June, and we initiated the process of canonization of Fr. Martin last July. Fr. Martin keeps smiling upon us from heaven...

Last Sunday was a wonderful beginning of our traditional celebration of November as the Month of BLACK CATHOLIC HISTORY. This celebration will continue NEXT SUNDAY NOVEMBER 17 as we welcome BISHOP ROY CAMPBELL at our 11:30 am Mass followed by reception and historical presentation of several Black Saints in our Father Martin Hall. YOU ARE ALL INVITED TO ATTEND AND BRING A FRIEND. Let us keep celebrating together our UNITY IN DIVERSITY!

LET US PRAY:

*Heavenly Father, we give you thanks for the richness of the diverse cultures of our parishioners at OLHOC. May you continue to bless our Unity in Diversity, and may the lives of Fr. TOLTON and Fr. MARTIN inspire all of us in our efforts of evangelization to reach out to everyone and welcome everyone in our parish. May we be one with the Eucharist!*

One in Christ,  
Fr. Alain