



Bison Catholic Forum

WINTER 2022

New Year of Ministry

We invite you to discover in these pages a small sampling of the happenings and activities of the Catholic Ministry at Howard University. There is so much to be thankful for, especially being back on campus after Covid-19 closed the university during the pandemic. Since last semester, we have been able to form a solid community of students who are eager to practice their faith and who desire to deepen their relationship with the Lord. And we do it all together, having fun while sharing the joy of the Gospel. We hope you enjoy getting to know our students and our ministry this year.

God Bless

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- First Year Student's Experience-2
- Saints at the Black Catholic History Mass-3
- A Pilgrimage to the National Shrine in DC-4
- Thursday Night Fellowships-5
- Alumni Spotlight: J. Patrick Rogers, '07-6
- Chaplain's Corner: Back to Campus-7
- Upcoming Events-8



“

"I love that we all come from different backgrounds and can share with one another and grow in our faith. "

First-year Student's Perspective

By Giannina Daniels- Lajon, '25

I am a first-year student at Howard, and I was not really sure what to expect being on campus, especially with COVID and going to a school out of state. I also didn't know how I would be able to actively practice my faith or how I would find people who were also Catholic. After searching online for a Catholic group on campus, I found HU Bison Catholic, and it has helped me to have structure in my life and find community. With the chaos of cancelled classes and a changing schedule during the semester, I could always look forward to Sunday Mass and Thursday night fellowship as a time to spend with others and a way to get out of my room.

Our outings have helped me to get familiar with the area, and I always have a lot of fun. There is definitely never a dull moment with the right people in attendance. I have learned a lot from my peers in this group. I love that we all come from different backgrounds and can share with one another and grow in our faith. Father Boxie is always willing to tackle any topic we bring up, and nothing is really off limits. He always makes a point to gear the homilies towards things that will relate to us and encourages us to lead discussions. HU Bison Catholic has made me more active in the school community and more aware of ways to step up. I look forward to this semester to have more activities and hopefully growing our community.



Saints at the Black Catholic History Mass

**BY ANTHONY MAY, SEMINARIAN,
DIOCESE OF RALEIGH**

This year's Black Catholic History Mass, held at Nativity Parish in Washington, D.C. was an amazing experience of Black Catholic culture in the nation's capital. The Mass was celebrated by Auxiliary Bishop Roy Campbell, Jr. (HU, '69), preaching to a congregation composed of parishioners from around the archdiocese, students and staff from Howard University, and Archbishop Carroll High School, and clergy from the Archdiocese of Washington and the Josephites. The music was provided by the energetic Archdiocesan Gospel Choir who enflamed the spirits of the congregation as they participated in the Holy Sacrifice. I was struck by Bishop Campbell's homily about the many Black Catholic saints and the six Black men and women now being considered for sainthood in Rome.



*ADW Black Catholic History Month Mass
Nativity Catholic Church, DC*



*Anthony May, 3rd year Basselin seminarian
at Theological College/CUA.*

Bishop Campbell drew our attention particularly to the love of God, a trait which was essential in the life of each of these men and women. He reminded us that these saints are to inspire us to love God like them and to become saints, too. When you looked at the pictures of these aspirants to canonization, you see so many smiles. You could tell that they were happy people not just because they had a sanguine personality, but because their happiness came from God. And these smiles were mirrored by so many people there in the congregation. I am especially referring to the affable Deacon Joseph Bell, who was recognized for his fifty years of teaching and ministry at Howard University during the Mass. Looking back on my experience, sitting there tucked away in a corner of the sanctuary and able to see the massive congregation and the priests and deacons listening to the bishop, I was struck by what a sign of devotion that Mass was for us. All of us, Black Catholics both residents of DC and visitors from other states, and even other countries, were ourselves looking for the love of God in this Mass. Through the music, through the readings, through the homily, and especially through the reception of the Eucharist, we were being lit with that fire of devotion that cannot help but ignite within us a desire for our heavenly Father, like lovers unable to resist running to the home of our beloved. Mass is not just a congregation of people gathering to perform a ritual; it is a collection of future saints with deep faith, with true zeal, and with inexorable love for the God who is our God.



A PILGRIMAGE TO THE NATIONAL SHRINE IN DC

BY MILES LEE, '24

On Saturday, November 6, 2021, the Howard University Catholic Student Ministry made a pilgrimage to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, the largest Roman Catholic Church in North America. The day's activities began in front of the Shrine with a brief lesson on the Shrine's architectural design and history led by Fr. Robert Boxie. The students also discussed the engraved Biblical figures, scenes, and symbols that adorn the Shrine's main entrance, including the depictions of prophets aligned with the main doors. Moving into the building, Fr. Boxie led the group on a walking tour of the entirety of the Shrine. The group first visited the Memorial Hall which honored all those who contributed towards the construction and funding of the Shrine. We then walked through the Crypt Church and visited the statues of Saints from all over the world. But the most memorable parts of the trip were still to come. We made sure to see all of Mother Mary's chapels. All of the chapels and their depictions of Mary were beautiful, but the one that resonated most with us was the Our Mother of Africa Chapel.

Inside was a bronze sculpture of a Black Madonna and Child flanked by the four authors of the Gospel. Across from the statue hung a bas-relief panel depicting the ancestors of Black Americans, following enslaved Africans' tumultuous path through the Jim Crow and Civil Rights eras in the United States. This chapel allowed us to reflect on our duties as young Black Catholics in this country. Fr. Boxie made it explicitly clear to us that we are the future of the Church, not in a symbolic sense. It is our collective responsibility to push the Catholic community forward. We owe it to those who came before us as depicted in the bas-relief, as well as to those who will lead after us. It is often difficult as a person of color to feel safe and accepted in this country. In response, we are called to make the Catholic Church into that space of unconditional love and acceptance that so many people of color have been and continue to be denied. It is, no doubt, a monumental task, but we certainly have the means to accomplish it. We concluded our pilgrimage with Mass held in the Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel, and the obligatory photo ops with a cardboard cutout of Pope Francis. The day at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception proved to be fun and enlightening and will not be soon forgotten.



[We are called to make the Catholic Church into that space of unconditional love and acceptance that so many people of color have been and continue to be denied. It is, no doubt, a monumental task, but we certainly have the means to accomplish it.]





“

It was a great environment to learn about the Catholic faith and what it offers us because we could ask questions and air our concerns in an environment where we're sure to get the truth.

Thursday Night Fellowships By Mary Elei Nkata, '25

I always look forward to Thursday evenings now. From game nights to Catholic missionaries coming in as guests, HU Bison Catholic always had something to fill your hearts and thoughts. We had such a beautiful opportunity to build our sense of community and connect with people at the weekly meetings of HU Bison Catholic. Our meetings typically started with us sharing our past week's experiences, leading into our praying the Rosary together. After the rosary, we shared a meal (most often pizza) and dove into the discussion of the night.

Many nights, we had discussions based on the doctrine and traditions of the Catholic Church led by our chaplain Father Boxie. It was a great environment to learn about the Catholic faith and what it offers us because we could ask questions and air our concerns in an environment where we are sure to get the truth. Our sessions weren't all discussion-based. We often played games designed to test our knowledge of some part of the Church, perhaps the Bible or Mary, the Mother of God. It was a fun way to get more exposure to the teachings of our faith. It was also pretty exciting to see each person's personality come out more during these games.

One of our star nights was when Mr. Santonio Hill, a missionary from Vagabond Missionaries visited us as a guest speaker. Hearing his stories about his work as a missionary and his experiences was invaluable and eye-opening to just how universal the Catholic Church is. Plus, we got Vagabond merch to boot. #Winning!

Overall, our Thursday meetings were a time for people to learn, share joys and sorrows, and grow closer to God. The best part of the deal? It's completely open to anyone interested in coming!



Alumni Corner: J. Patrick Rogers Class of 2007



Experiencing Black Catholic Mass

After graduating from high school in June 2002, I moved to Washington, DC from Cincinnati, Ohio to enroll at Howard University, majoring in Chemical Engineering. During the spring semester of 2003, Ms. Jacqueline Deckard, a longtime parishioner at St. Augustine Catholic Church, indirectly encouraged me through a classmate to attend St. Augustine Catholic Church. At the 12:30pm Mass at St. Augustine, I experienced a Catholic Mass from a Black Catholic perspective for the first time. That experience provided me with an example of how Black Catholic communities beautifully merge Black American Christian cultural experiences with Catholic teachings. After attending St. Augustine and other Black Catholic churches throughout the country, I made the decision to go through the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) program at St. Augustine in September 2004 and on March 27, 2005, I was officially received into the Catholic Church.



St. Augustine Catholic Church, D.C.

This experience at St. Augustine provided me with an example of how Black Catholic communities beautifully merge Black American Christian cultural experiences with Catholic teachings.

Being Catholic at Howard

Following my reception into the Catholic Church, I joined the Howard University Newman Club under Fr. Martin Yina, MSP. In the Newman Club, I found a smaller, tight-knit community where I served as a lector, participated in retreats/activities at St. Joseph's Seminary, and grew as a Catholic during our Thursday evening meetings. Following my graduation in May 2007, I moved to Davis, California where I attended the University of California-Davis in pursuit of my Doctorate in Chemistry.

Being Catholic in the "Real World"

While I moved forward in my education, I realized that I yearned for the Black Catholic perspective which was so readily available in parishes within the Archdiocese of Washington. I located the parish through a national listing of Black Catholic parishes that was available on the National Black Catholic Congress website. Attending Sunday Masses at St. Columba during their six-week Black History Month program helped me during a difficult time in graduate school. Following post-graduate fellowships, I returned to the DC area to serve as a Chemistry Instructor at Howard. Currently, I serve in ministry at St. Augustine Catholic Church and work as a toxicologist at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).



Chaplain's Corner: Back To Campus!

Fr. Robert P. Boxie, III

What a difference a year has made! Even though I begin officially my second year as priest chaplain at Howard, it very much feels like I am a new "Freshman." Coming out of the pandemic last year, with a closed campus and virtual ministry, and now being on campus for the first time undoubtedly feels like night and day. A new optimism and energy have filled the Hilltop this fall with students from every year eager to return to Howard: juniors and seniors reconnecting with friends and making up for the lost three semesters away from campus; both sophomores and freshmen arriving for the first time, immersing themselves in the Howard experience and making their mark on campus.



Celebrating Student Mass

The pandemic underscored that natural human need to be with one another and to be in relationship ("It is not good that man should be alone." Gen. 2,18) I have had the opportunity to meet some wonderful, creative, and motivated students, as my "office" has been hanging out on the yard, introducing myself to students and staff, and being present. So far, it's been great!

This renewed energy on campus has fueled a strong start to ministry in the fall semester. Students want to be in community and in each other's presence, and we have been able to provide a much-needed outlet for students to be together. Thankfully, we have resumed on-campus, in-person Masses on Sunday evenings and our Thursday fellowship nights in Carnegie, following all university and archdiocesan protocols. (A special note of gratitude goes to volunteer Ms. Cassie Perry who graciously supplied our Sunday meals.)



Thursday fellowship nights have resumed in-person as well. We have covered a wide range of topics, from prayer to understanding the Mass to game night to grilling the chaplain with questions! Mr. Santonio Hill of Vagabond Missions spoke to our students about his vocation and work as a real-life Catholic missionary in Pittsburgh. We had a successful fall retreat, led by Fr. Cornelius Ejiogu, SSJ, as well as a pilgrimage to the National Shrine, complete with a tour, Mass, and lunch. The highlight of the semester was our participation in the Archdiocese of Washington's Black Catholic History Month Mass in November. Our students participated in the Mass as lectors, and we recognized Deacon Joseph Bell, my predecessor, with a special award for his fifty years of service to Howard University and the Archdiocese of Washington. With our student leadership team in place, we are looking forward to more opportunities for ministry this Spring semester, to grow in our Catholic faith, to build community, and to bring Christ to Howard's campus. Please keep our efforts and our ministry in your prayers.



Bishop Campbell ('69), Dcn. Bell & Fr. Boxie

The pandemic underscored that natural human need to be with one another and to be in relationship



Upcoming Events This Semester



CHOSEN

Diocesan Priesthood and Religious Life Discernment Retreat
featuring Fr. Josh Johnson and Sr. Josephine Garrett

JUNE 3-5, 2022
St. Joseph Abbey in Covington, Louisiana
All men and women 18-40 are eligible to attend.

Scan the QR code to register or visit www.diobr.org/vocations

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
Center for Cultural Engagement


The Wisdom of Sr. Thea Bowman for a Church in Crisis

A PRESENTATION BY
REV. MANUEL WILLIAMS, C.R.

FEBRUARY 15, 2022 | 12:30 PM | PRYZ GREAT ROOMS

Rev. Manuel B. Williams, C.R., CFRE, M.Div., Th.M., preaches revivals and missions throughout the U.S., specializing in African-American Catholic spirituality and history. He is an adjunct instructor at the Institute for Black Catholic Studies (IBCS) at Xavier University New Orleans.

Lunch will be provided.
For questions or accommodations, contact: bustamantej@cua.edu




if you wish

MATTHEW 8:1-4
SPRING HEALING RETREAT

SUMMIT LAKE CAMP MARCH 4-6 2022




UMD CATHOLIC TERPS

Women's Bible Study

Mondays | 8 PM

Undergraduate Library

**JOIN GROUP ME
CHAT BY
SCANNING QR CODE**




STAY CONNECTED WITH US

Immaculate Conception Catholic Church
1315 8th Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20001

hunewmanclub@gmail.com

www.hubisoncatholic.com

www.facebook.com/HUBisonCatholic
www.instagram.com/hu_bisoncatholic