



HISTORY | Back Catholic Experience in Virginia...

1866: Second Plenary Council encourages establishing schools and orphanages for African Americans; to establish separate churches or invite African Americans to existing churches

1880: Black lay catechists, graduates of the Josephites Epiphany Apostolic College of Baltimore, opened a school for blacks in Jarratt

1884: St. Joseph's Parish founded for Black Catholics

1885: Bishop Keane signed deed for property to be consecrated for church on Shockoe Hill

1887: Wales R. Tyrrell and Joseph Griffin enter the seminary for the Mill Hill Fathers at St. Peter's College near Liverpool England.

1893: St. Francis Colored Foundling and Orphan started

1894: 1,600 acre-estate purchased in Rock Castle on the James River in Powhatan County to establish St. Emma's, an industrial and agricultural school for boys.

1894: St. Joseph's Charity Circle organized to do charity work

1895: St. Emma's Industrial and Agricultural College for boys dedicated.

1897: St. Joseph's Cemetery for Colored Catholics established

1899: St. Francis de Sales for girls opened at Rock Castle

1905: Ladies Sodality organized at St. Joseph's Parish

1910: Van de Vyver school of Richmond opened

1913: Holy Name Society organized at St. Joseph's Parish

1917 – 1918: 1,600 Black Catholics in Virginia, 11 churches for Black Catholics and 12 schools for African Americans

1925: Thomas Wyatt Turner, a professor at Hampton Institute, organized the Federated Colored Catholics of the United States

1937: Bishop O'Connell dedicated St. Augustine Church in Fulton area of Richmond

1945: St. Alphonsus mission opened in Newport News

1945: Holy Family Church started in Petersburg

1946: St. Gerard Church opened in Roanoke

1948: Chapel of Our Lady of Perpetual Help started as a mission of St. Gerard's

1949: Richmond diocese actively participate in voter registration drive of the NAACP. W. Lester Banks of NAACP asked Bishop Ireton's cooperation, support and guidance

1951: Mrs. Lydia Elizabeth Nicholas, first woman in the diocese to receive the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice medal. She served 47 years in Columbia. She taught in a one-room school in Columbia.

1953: St. Margaret Mary mission established in Charlottesville

1953: Holy Rosary established in Richmond

1954: Bishop Ireton desegregated diocesan schools on the eve of Brown vs. Board of Education Supreme court decision

1956: Father Theophilus Brown, O. S. B. said his first Mass at St. Joseph's. Fr. Brown was the first parishioner of St. Joseph's to be ordained a priest.

1963: Brother Martin de Porres Smith of Holy Rosary took his final vows as a Redemptorist.

1969: St. Joseph's of Richmond, the oldest parish for Black Catholics formally closed and financial assets were transferred to Holy Rosary. The stained glass windows went to St. John's church in Woodstock, Virginia.

1970: St. Francis de Sales School for girls closed

1971: Black Catholic Youth Choir started

1972: St. Emma's for boys closed.

May 3, 1975: Fr. Walter Barrett ordained to Priesthood in diocese of Richmond

1977: Fr. Walter Barrett becomes first Black Pastor in Diocese of Richmond

1979: Black Experience Retreats begin

Aug. 16, 1980: Fr. Lloyd Stephenson ordained to Priesthood in diocese of Richmond

1980: Office for Black Catholics established in diocese of Richmond; Brother Matthias Newell served as the Director

May 8, 1982: Father J. Stephen Hickman ordained to Priesthood in diocese of Richmond

1982: Sr. Cora Marie Billings, RSM, becomes Director of the Office for Black Catholics

May 14, 1983: Father McKinley Williams ordained to Priesthood in diocese of Richmond

1984: Office for Black Catholics become involved in Haitian Ministry

May 16, 1987: Father Matthias Newell ordained to Priesthood in diocese of Richmond

May 14, 1988: Father John Boddie ordained to Priesthood in diocese of Richmond

1990: Sr. Cora Marie Billings, RSM, becomes The First African American Nun to Head a Parish in The United States; becomes the First African American woman to serve as Pastoral Coordinator in the Diocese of Richmond, Virginia

1996: The Kujenga Experience for African American high school students begins