

Archways



PIERRE TOUSSAINT: NEW YORK'S FIRST BLACK SAINT?

**His Path from Slavery to
Freedom to Veneration**

Joyful Passages

Favorite Spring Readings
of New York Catholics



Plus:

- Teaching the Faith: Religious Education Amid the Pandemic
- Head Above Water: The Emotional and Spiritual Perils of Isolation
- Eucharistic Adoration: Origins and Benefits
- What Is Paschal Time?





Easter Mass 2021 at St. Patrick's Cathedral.
Photo by Maria Bastone.

FROM THE CARDINAL

LET THE HEALING BEGIN

Thanks be to God, there is increasing confidence that the worst of the coronavirus pandemic is past. Millions are being vaccinated, restrictions are loosening, businesses and public events are re-opening, and people have begun returning to Mass in greater numbers each week.

Don't get me wrong. We still have to be careful. Virus variants have stalled the decrease in new Covid-19 cases in the United States, and if we throw caution to the wind we could risk causing a new surge. We don't want that.

"Be not afraid," Jesus said. He never said, "Be reckless" or "Don't worry about putting your neighbor's life at risk." But he does call us to be bold in following him – even though letting go of the fear and hurt can sometimes seem impossible.

We have been through a traumatic experience. We were surrounded by much suffering and death for months on end. Frontline medical workers carried the brunt of this burden, but all of us were weighed down by it. Thousands of New Yorkers lost loved ones – and couldn't visit them or attend a timely funeral. A million New Yorkers lost their jobs. And we all experienced isolation that still just seems to go on and on.

Now it's time for the healing to begin. A good place to start is "**Return of the Faithful**," our special report in this issue of *Archways*. As the pastors and health professionals in this story attest, your parishes are doing all in

their power to ensure you can come back to Mass in person (if you haven't already done so) in a safe and welcoming environment. We miss you! The Mystical Body of Christ needs its members back. And perhaps most importantly, we can't heal ourselves in isolation. We all need the community – the Church – and the healing power of the Eucharist.

Also in this issue: a profile of **Venerable Pierre Toussaint**, born a slave, who, please God, will become New York's first Black saint. Toussaint survived multiple traumatic events. He witnessed a fierce and bloody revolution in Haiti that separated him forever from family members and drove his French masters to New York. Here, even after attaining his freedom, he endured prejudice as a man of color and as a Catholic, and nearly lost everything in the Great New York Fire of 1836. During a devastating cholera epidemic, he ventured regularly into the quarantine zones to assist the sick. When his sister died, he adopted her daughter, only to lose the girl when she was 14 years old. Consistently, through prayer and devotion to our Lord, he recovered from these shocks to perform countless good works. He was known, among other things, for his consistent cheerfulness.

You'll also find Dr. Donna Eschenbach, associate professor of pastoral theology at St. Joseph's Seminary, on the meaning of the glorious Paschal season that carries the joy of Easter forward into the year; Fr. Rufus Kenny of

St. Joseph's, Somers, on the origins and benefits of Eucharistic adoration; and a look at the inspiring work of our religious education ministries around the archdiocese to keep our young people engaged and growing in their faith in this challenging time. Let me tell you, it's not just about Zoom classes!

And finally, in "**Joyful Passages**," we've asked a few priests, women religious, and music ministers to share with us some favorite readings, prayers, and hymns to guide us toward healing and a deeper appreciation of this joyful season of the Church year.

It may seem hard to reconcile all this joy with the deep spiritual sadness, born of the pandemic, that became a significant part of our lives in the past year. This pain lingers in our hearts, along with fear. But there is no greater balm for this than a return to the community of our parishes and the sharing of Mass with our fellow faithful.

Many New York Catholics have already come back. For the rest of you, I can only say: We miss you, and we can promise you safe places of worship that go above and beyond government guidelines. Yes, we're wearing masks and maintaining distance, but it turns out that Christian love overcomes all that.

When you are ready, great joy awaits you! Jesus is ready to welcome you with open arms and once again offer Himself to you in the holy sacrifice of the Eucharist.

For the troubled soul, there's no better medicine than that.

Yours in Christ,

+ *Tim. Card. Dolan*

Timothy Michael Cardinal Dolan
Archbishop of New York



12 RETURN OF THE FAITHFUL

The Body of Christ needs you

20 VENERABLE PIERRE TOUSSAINT

The path from slavery to possible sainthood

26 JOYFUL PASSAGES

The words that inspire us

1 FROM THE CARDINAL

We've experienced a trauma; let's come together to heal as a community

4 FORUM

Where did Eucharistic adoration originate and why is it so popular? What is Paschal Time?

6 NEWS AND NOTES

How religious education directors, catechists and families made the most of a tough year; the mental health tolls of social distancing; CASA pushes the envelope; a writer's retreat at Mariandale

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Archways ✠

is published four times a year by the
Archdiocese of New York Marketing Office

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ASK A PRIEST

Before 2010, I had never heard of Eucharistic adoration. Where did it come from, and what is its purpose?

Unlike all the other sacraments, the Eucharist is “permanent”: When the Mass is offered, our Lord is present in the Holy Sacrament, and His Presence can be kept after the Mass.

As early as the second century AD, the liturgical practice of keeping the Eucharist reserved in the church so that it could be brought to the sick and dying was already in place. Over the centuries, people began to pray before and adore Christ in the reserved Blessed Sacrament – an organic expression of the faithful’s piety. We have journals from monks in the ancient Church that speak of praying before our Lord’s reserved presence in their chapels.

Of course, this early practice was not adoration as we envision it today. The monstrance, a sacred device used to expose the Eucharist, was not introduced until around the 13th century. It was used in processions on the great feast of Corpus Christi. By the 17th century, the liturgical practice of benediction of the Blessed Sacrament during Sunday’s Evening Prayer developed. The faithful would be blessed by the Lord in the Holy Eucharist. It was not until 1973 that Eucharistic adoration became an official liturgical rite, with its own official instruction and authoritative guidelines from the Congregation of Divine Worship.

As an official practice, then, Eucharistic adoration as we know it is pretty new, but as an inspired movement from the Holy Spirit, it is ancient – the fruit of the faithful’s natural piety. Adoration is an example of how good



The Holy Eucharist displayed in a monstrance for adoration.

things in the Church often begin on the local level and eventually become recognized on the universal level. Sometimes what’s best comes from the bottom up rather than the top down.

In the decades following Vatican II, there was a movement against Eucharistic adoration. Some clergy and laity believed that adoration was taking away from or missing the point of the Mass. In recent years, adoration overcame these objections. Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI gave us many authoritative documents affirming this good practice. For them, adoration only increased devotion to the Lord with more devotion.

In adoration, all of our senses are directed toward Him. Within this sacred space, you can pray the rosary, do a Divine Mercy chaplet, or perform any other kind of formal prayers. You can say the Our Father, St. Michael, or the Divine Praises. But you could also just

sit there in peace and silence and know that He is God. The nature of prayer, simply put, is our gift of time to God, so that we can express by our very presence that we love Him, honor Him, and freely choose to worship Him.

In a world that has grown increasingly noisy, where silence is hard to find, Jesus provides a place with Him where all of our anxieties, concerns, and regrets can come to the surface of our hearts and be passed on to Him. “Jesus, I believe you’re there. I love you. I hope and trust that you’re going to get me through whatever I might be experiencing. And I want to thank you.”

So, please come to adoration and empty yourself into Christ so that he can make you more alive by filling you with his divine life.

Fr. Rufus Kenney
Parochial Vicar
St. Joseph’s, Somers
Interviewed by Michael S. Cain



What Is Paschal Time?

Paschal Time (also called Easter Time) marks the high point of the Church’s year and therefore has profound significance for our identity as Catholic Christians. Technically, it is a seven-week season that begins at Easter Sunday and ends with Pentecost Sunday. To better appreciate its meaning, however, we need to understand Paschal Time within the context of the full liturgical calendar, and especially in light of the Paschal Triduum, which immediately precedes and leads into it.

Each year, the Catholic liturgy not only tells the Christian story, but makes it active and present in our lives. Through the feasts and seasons of the liturgical calendar, we remember the events of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, beginning with Advent and culminating in the Easter season (after which we are in Ordinary Time until the next Advent). The period from Advent through Pentecost brings us from darkness to light and from death to new life.

Following Lent, a 40-day period of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, the Church gathers to celebrate the Paschal Triduum. *Triduum*, Latin for “three days,” is a term coined by St. Augustine in the fourth century. These three days, from Holy Thursday night through Evening Prayer on Easter Sunday, are the Christian Passover and commemorate the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. During this sacred time, one event – the Paschal Mystery – takes place through what we might call movements, beginning with the Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Thursday night, continuing on Good Friday with the Passion of Our Lord and on Holy Saturday with the Easter Vigil, and reaching its glorious conclusion on Easter Sunday.

The Paschal Triduum leads us into Paschal Time. This season doesn’t prepare us for something in the way Advent prepares us for Christmas and Lent for Easter. Paschal Time is 50 days of prolonging the joy of Easter Sunday. Accordingly, following Easter

Sunday, we refer to Sundays *of* Easter, not Sundays *after* Easter. In the words of St. Athanasius, we can refer to Paschal Time as one “Great Sunday.”

The readings for the Sundays of Easter are all from the New Testament, and the first reading for each Sunday is from the Acts of the Apostles, an account of the early Christian community’s experience and the development of the Church, animated by the work of the Holy Spirit. The continuous reading of the gospel according to John takes us from the empty tomb to Jesus’ hope-filled appearances to his disciples. Each week Jesus stands in their midst and offers peace, mercy and most of all, his abiding love.

The season is highlighted with the Feast of the Ascension of the Lord. The feast’s readings give an account of Jesus’ command “Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). In addition, Jesus assures his disciples of the presence of the Holy Spirit, who will guide their missionary work.

Pentecost Sunday marks the end of Paschal Time. In the words of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1076), “The Church was made manifest to the world on the day of Pentecost by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Spirit ushers in a new era in the ‘dispensation of the mystery’ – the age of the Church, during which Christ manifests, makes present, and communicates his work of salvation through the liturgy.”

Through the Sacred Paschal Triduum and Easter Time, the Church celebrates the Paschal Mystery in a way that reflects its deep significance for us as a community of believers. Paschal Time affirms that for us, as the baptized, the Paschal Mystery becomes the pattern for our hope and therefore gives new meaning to living and dying. Through baptism, we enter into Christ’s death and his Resurrection, which shows us how to live in a world that is unstable yet filled with grace.

Dr. Donna Eschenauer
Associate Dean and Associate
Professor of Pastoral Theology
St. Joseph’s Seminary, Yonkers

TEACHING THE FAITH

POSITIVE LESSONS IN A PAINFUL YEAR

As fall 2020 began, religious education directors in New York weren't sure what to expect. They had spent the summer coming up with plan B for delivering faith instruction to the children of their communities during a pandemic. Some planned to go high tech, others low tech, but for all there was uncertainty.

The first questions were whether parents would sign their kids up and whether the kids would actually attend. "To our surprise, there was less than 20% drop-off in registration from the year before," says Ela Milewska, director of the Archdiocese of New York Youth Faith Formation Office. "And those who registered are participating. Parish directors and coordinators have engaged those families in a way that has been phenomenal."

The ministries' approaches have been as varied as the parishes they serve. Only 10% to 15% of parishes have conducted all classes in person. The rest have used a hybrid or fully remote approach, depending on conditions in their area. Some remote classes have been conducted via Zoom, others have used video lessons, and some have provided digital materials to parents for home teaching.

"When the whole thing started in March of last year, we switched to e-learning – Google Classroom," says Marie Noel, religious education coordinator at St. Clare's on Staten Island. "That was a learning curve for the catechists. But the kids, the families, the catechists really came through." Spring sacraments were postponed, but almost all of the students successfully completed their classes for the academic year.

"When we resumed in the fall, we completely changed the structure of program again," Noel says. "There

was no way we could return in person, so we did weekly classes on Zoom to give students face-to-face lessons with the catechists. At first, people were a little confused, but once it kicked in, around October, it was a success."

The response from families has been very positive. "Sometimes the teachers send activities home that involve the whole family or assign online activities that involve the parents," Noel says. "One father told me, 'I'm so happy, I'm learning so much myself!' The catechesis of the parents has been the highlight of the year for me."

At St. Joseph's in Bronxville, director of religious education Antoinette Gilligan recalls how the stakes changed in March 2020. "When we went into lockdown," she says, "we had confirmation two days before Masses were suspended. I spent the next two weeks worrying about people getting sick."

Over the summer, she made plans for fully remote instruction, but she took the technology in a different direction from St. Clare's. "The archdiocese didn't want us to do live Zoom sessions unless the parents were in the conference," she says. So instead of using live Zoom, St. Joseph's created highly engaging video classes. "We have 35 catechists who volunteered to teach remotely. Each week, they record themselves teaching the chapter. Then they use an application called Screencast-O-Matic to embed videos, pictures and quizzes. I have learned so much from our catechists, who all approach things differently."

Gilligan treasures the emails from parents. One wrote, "The time we spend together reading the lessons with [our daughter], watching the videos and discussing the stories ... has reinforced our understanding of our faith as well as teaching our child."



Ava Hagan, a second grader at St. Stephen's in Warwick, created this Lego version of the church (plus a video tour).

In a providential bit of timing, St. Stephen's Church in Warwick had a video system installed to enable livestreaming one week before the shutdown of churches. "We've been blessed," says Lydia vanDuynhoven, the religious education director. "We didn't skip a beat. We were able to provide parishioners with Mass and Holy Hour. Our children were able to log on to come to Mass on Sundays or during the week. That helped a lot."

For weekly classes, vanDuynhoven took an approach that focused on family catechesis. "We're using a program of study called CatholicBrain," she says. "It has lessons for various grade levels with text, pictures and videos. I've written lesson plans for each

grade to correlate with the guidelines from the archdiocese and make use of the lessons offered by CatholicBrain."

Children and their parents have to sign on together to complete lessons. "Parents make sure their kids are signed up and signed in. I can see how they are doing with their lessons: The student's work gets posted, and I go in, see how they're doing, and if there's a problem, I let them know. 'OK, good try, but I think you could do better; let's look at this again.' So it's really kind of a one-on-one even though I'm not with them."

In a normal year, there are 65 catechists teaching in the St. Stephen's program. This year there were no catechists. The teaching was done by parents, overseen by vanDuynhoven.

Sometimes restrictions come with unexpected blessings. When limitations

on guest attendance were imposed at in-person events like First Communion and confirmations, vanDuynhoven found, the social aspect of the occasion took a back seat to something more meaningful. "I'm sure you've been to confirmations where the church is packed and people are climbing over pews to take pictures," she says. At this year's rite – not a Mass – attendance was limited to confirmandi, sponsors, and two parents. "The people who were present were truly present. It was beautiful."

At St. Clare's, "The pandemic pushed us to think outside the box, to make religious education a little more fun for the children," Marie Noel says. "Many catechists came up with their own programs. Sometimes they used Kahoot when teaching. One of my catechists

is 84 years old. She learned how to do Zoom. Many of us learned we could do things we never thought we could."

Antoinette Gilligan is coming out of this painful year with a strong sense of optimism. "I come from Ireland," she says, "where I was raised with a deep knowledge of Irish history. At one point, Catholics in Ireland weren't allowed to go to Mass. The faith was outlawed, so it became a priority."

"This year, life has been very challenging for our parents, having to balance work, home and school. On top of everything else, they have made it a point to be involved in their kids' religion classes. They've made it a priority. That gives me hope for the Church, that there will be a new generation of Catholics who are motivated by the love of Christ." ✨

NEWSFEED

CASA Pushes the Envelope

In a year of greater need than ever, the Cardinal's Annual Stewardship Appeal for 2020 – "Teach, Serve, Sanctify" – was forced to operate without its most familiar fundraising tools: the envelopes in the pews and the sign at the front of the church showing the parish's progress toward its goal. Thanks to the generosity of New York Catholics, that didn't stop the appeal from raising almost \$20 million.

This largesse enabled CASA to address needs made more urgent by the pandemic, supporting Catholic Charities in the distribution of 1.6 million meals in the most financially vulnerable areas of the archdiocese; aiding parishes transitioning to digital ministry; providing \$12 million in scholarships to 11,000 Catholic school students and Chromebooks for 5,700 students and 1,200 teachers; delivering financial support for 33 parishes in need and funding for parish ministries supporting the homebound elderly; and more.

Given the great need, this year's CASA fundraising target is \$21 million, earmarked for:

- Assistance for financially vulnerable parishes

- Formation of new parish priests
- Evangelization and Catholic education
- Care for retired parish priests
- Charitable outreach
- Covid-19 relief

At this time, the appeal is on track to meet or exceed its goal. You can contribute at www.cardinalsappeal.org/donate. Those who donate online can still designate their parish on the digital form so that their community gets credit for the contribution. Think of it as a virtual envelope.

Musical Knowledge

Parish musicians who want to immerse themselves in the beauty and holiness of the Church's sacred music can enroll in classes offered by St. Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers. The intensive courses are designed to help students grow both spiritually and as musicians. This year's classes will be conducted remotely.

Courses include Principles of Sacred Music, Principles of Chant, Teaching Gregorian Chant to Children, Introduction to Liturgy, and Advanced Seminar in Gregorian Chant. For information, go to dunwoodie.edu and click on "Dunwoodie Music."

The Nature of Writing

Many writers are isolationists by disposition: They may reach out to others in researching their work, but at the moment of creation they usually seek silence and solitude to usher their words into the light of day.

Writer's retreats offer a chance for these lone creators to find solace in the company of others engaged in the same pursuit. It's encouraging to see, after more than a year of social distancing, the Center at Mariandale, a sponsored ministry of the Dominican Sisters of Hope in Ossining, offering "[The Light of Inspiration Awaits](#)," a weekend writing retreat, June 18–21. Led by writer and artist Magie Dominic, the event offers morning workshops, healthful food, and lodgings at Mariandale, with gorgeous sunsets over the Hudson River and 61 acres of bucolic grounds to wander for spiritual sustenance.

Archways on the Web

As part of our mission to inform and inspire, *Archways* has launched a new website! For full access to all our stories, including bonus content, check out archwaysmag.org. ✨



ISSUE

THE AGONY OF ISOLATION



Since March of 2020, Covid-19 has put up barriers to normal life for all of us. For many children and teenagers, the effects of isolation – lockdowns, social distancing, bans on gatherings, distance learning – have been devastating. We asked **Todd Karlin, Psy.D., chief program officer of Astor Services** (a Catholic Charities of New York-affiliated agency serving children and families in the mid-Hudson Valley and the Bronx), to give us an overview of what young people are facing and what parents and community members can do to help.

Archways: What kinds of emotional or psychological tolls have pandemic restrictions taken on our young people?

Dr. Todd Karlin: The toll has been significant, beginning with the loss of activities and social engagement – extracurricular activities, proms, graduations. These experiences can't be

replaced. On top of that, there has been the unpredictability and uncertainty tied to this yearlong event. Without a clear end in sight, it has been hard for some adolescents to envision a future in which this will be behind us.

For many who were already struggling with mental health issues, the loss of direct connection with others and the inability to engage in coping strategies has exacerbated symptoms. Understandably, there has been increased reliance on social media for connection. That may be better than no connection at all, but can create a distorted view of reality and heighten feelings of depression and anxiety.

Archways: Has the pandemic period caused an increase in substance abuse?

Dr. Todd Karlin: Early data suggests that there has been an uptick in usage and overdoses during the pandemic. Contributing factors are a lack of

other outlets for youth through socialization or athletic activities, as well as simple boredom. Unfortunately, solitary drug use in the home has a greater potential to lead to accidental overdose, so the danger is magnified.

Archways: Has there been an increase in frequency or severity of domestic violence or abuse?

Dr. Todd Karlin: There is evidence that instances of domestic violence and abuse have increased. This uptick has been detected in spite of the fact that many reports of child abuse and neglect ordinarily surface from school reports. With so many schools closed early in the pandemic and many kids learning remotely, school reports fell off initially. And with many partners and children in lockdown with their abuser, supporting victims through treatment presented unique challenges, since privacy is essential for

the safety of a victim of abuse who is reaching out to get support.

Archways: What sort of issues are we seeing in young children and teenagers? In parents?

Dr. Todd Karlin: Anxiety, depression and trauma manifest differently for each group, but have impacted everyone. For our younger kids, while some of them are managing the upheaval, others are struggling, and the impacts can be pervasive on social skills development, academic progress and mental health. Other kids have thrived in the short term with some of the typical stressors of the school day removed, but they may be re-entering school this fall not having seen a classroom (or attended regularly) in as much as 18 months. This will be a tremendously difficult transition for many of them. Disparities in access to technology or high-speed internet mean that the impact has not been felt equally by all populations. These disparities have also impacted impoverished communities in their access to remote medical and mental health support.

For parents, it's important to note that none of this is occurring in a vacuum – increased parental stress impacts the family system and has residual impact on kids. It can't be repeated often enough: To successfully care for others, you must care for yourself.

Archways: Has there been an increase in mental health emergencies? Has the suicide rate gone up?

Dr. Todd Karlin: It's been abundantly clear that high-risk crisis behaviors and suicide attempts have increased. The CDC estimated a significant increase in suicidal thoughts this summer for older adolescents and young adults compared to pre-pandemic. Recent research has suggested that the same non-white communities that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID are experiencing the most significant mental health impact. We've seen a tremendous need for services for the most vulnerable children and adolescents; the programs that serve them are constantly at full capacity or at a

backlog. With schools not identifying kids as early, by the time some students are referred, they are already in crisis.

Archways: What can we do as individuals to ease the pain of a neighbor or loved one in emotional distress?

Dr. Todd Karlin: Checking in on one another and reaching out to someone who might be experiencing distress can be the most powerful intervention. While these may be difficult

“To successfully care for others, you must care for yourself.”

conversations to begin, many times people are grateful that their distress has been noticed. By showing that you care about their pain, you can move someone to seek help.

Be persistent in outreach. Ask honest questions about whether the person has had thoughts or plans that involve self-harm. It's important to know that bringing up concerns about self-harm does not lead to increased suicidal thoughts. On the contrary, by directly addressing this question, you allow for an honest response.

While we never know when we might find ourselves in a position to intervene, keeping handy information about community resources, help-lines, or houses of worship can make all the difference. If someone is expressing suicidal thoughts with plans or intent to harm themselves, they should be evaluated by a medical or behavioral health professional. ✖

SUICIDE PREVENTION

Do You Know the Warning Signs?

Life is a gift, but emotional suffering can make a young person lose the will to hold onto it. Here are signs to watch out for in a young person at risk for self-harm.

FEELINGS like hopelessness about the future, extreme sadness, anxiety, anger or aggressiveness.

ACTIONS like withdrawing from activities or friendships, taking risks or researching ways to die online.

CHANGES in normal mood and behavior. If you observe changes that concern you, reach out to others in your child's life to see if they've noticed anything similar.

THREATS such as “I'd rather be dead” or even vague statements like “I just don't care about anything anymore.”

SITUATIONS that might trigger suicidal behavior, such as getting into trouble, experiencing some type of loss or facing a life change that the child finds overwhelming.

If you see any of these signs, talk with the young person straightforwardly. If they say they are thinking about harming themselves – especially if they have a plan for how to do it – seek professional help.

RETURN OF THE FAITHFUL

THE BODY OF CHRIST NEEDS YOU

Coming Home to Mass

Photo by Chris Sheridan



THEN: St. Patrick's Cathedral, packed for Easter 2019.



NOW: Easter 2021 at a socially distanced St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Photo by Maria Bastone

We all remember how Mass used to be, a little over a year ago. The pews filled with the faithful. Our voices joined in song. The handshake of peace. Fingers dipped in holy water. Embracing friends after the recessional.

Then a virus with a strange name turned hope and joy into fear and trepidation. Mass was suddenly off limits to the public. We pined for the Eucharist, but got accustomed to tuning in via TV or internet, seeing Mass play out in an eerily empty church. In the months since in-person Masses resumed, many of us have still not come back – though, as the weather warms, more and more are doing so.

For this feature, *Archways* consulted with pastors and public health experts to assess where we are on the path to pre-pandemic attendance levels, what we'll have to do to make people feel safe, and what "normal" will look like even after the virus has been subdued.



FROM A DISTANCE. CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A tabernacle set in the doorway of St. Barnabas in the Bronx for outdoor adoration, May 2020; a moment of private prayer at Sacred Heart, Yonkers, June 2020; Fr. John J. Wroblewski livestreaming the 2020 Easter Vigil Mass from St. Anthony of Padua, Staten Island; Fr. Robert Dillon recites the rosary live on Facebook from the rectory at St. Thomas the Apostle, Staten Island.

A Shock to the System

It seemed to happen without warning. At the beginning of March 2020, we were going to Mass as usual, taking our temperatures and washing our hands thoroughly. The notion of canceling the St. Patrick's Day Parade was unthinkable – until it happened. And two days later came the announcement from the archdiocese:

(New York, NY) In light of the continued concern surrounding the coronavirus, and the advice of medical

experts, all Masses in the Archdiocese of New York will be canceled beginning this weekend, March 14–15, 2020.

– Press release, March 14, 2020

For many New Yorkers, this was the moment we realized: *Whoa, this is serious.*

At the time, the total coronavirus death toll in New York State was two, and daily new cases less than 200. A month later, new cases had topped 10,000 per day. On April 13 alone, more than 1,000 New Yorkers died of Covid-19. The

necessity of shutting down in-person Masses had become clear.

Meanwhile, the parishes and ministries of the Archdiocese of New York had sprung into action. ArchCare, working with local parishes and congregations of men and women religious, sent chaplains into quarantine to serve Catholics in the region's hospitals. Catholic Charities and its affiliated agencies, while observing health protocols, redoubled efforts to provide food, shelter and other critical assistance to those in need.



CHRIST'S WORK CONTINUES: After the pandemic hit the region, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York stepped up its services to people in need – providing 1.6 million meals in 2020 and increasing services to the homeless, immigrants, day laborers, at-risk adolescents and those suffering with mental-health issues. Here, clients line up to receive boxed provisions from a food pantry at Betances Houses in the Bronx. Photo by Maria Bastone.

“
We are not
islands, to be
isolated. We
need others.
So don't be
afraid to come
to Mass.”

FR. JOSE CRUZ
OUR LADY QUEEN OF MARTYRS,
INWOOD

“This Is God Here”

Many parishes held Mass in empty churches and provided a virtual experience to the faithful via livestream or video recordings posted online. Some also livestreamed holy hours or Eucharistic adoration or Bible readings. Among the hundreds of Facebook Live offerings around the archdiocese, St. Lawrence O'Toole in Brewster featured nightly “Psalm You to Sleep” readings, and Fr. Robert Dillon of St. Thomas the Apostle on Staten Island led parishioners in praying the rosary from his desk in the rectory.

Pastors also took their ministries out of doors, through parking-lot Masses, drive-through confessions, displays of the Eucharist via a monstrance or tabernacle set in a doorway or window, or physically carrying the monstrance through the streets, bringing Jesus to the faithful when the faithful were unable to come to Him.

“Here in Millbrook, I took the Eucharist in the monstrance around the streets a number of times, just by myself, processing with Him to remind people that He is here,” says Fr. Hartley Bancroft, pastor at St. Joseph's in Millbrook. “Other parishes did similar things, too. That was a great sign for people in the village that, yes, this is God here.”

Easter 2020 saw not just an empty tomb, but empty pews. Thousands tuned in for the live-stream from St. Patrick's Cathedral.

On May 21, 10 weeks after the closing of Masses, the archdiocese announced a plan to phase in reopenings over the coming weeks based on infection rates in each locality. All over the region, pastors saw the light at the end of the tunnel. They began making preparations to safely accommodate an onslaught of returning parishioners.

By the Numbers

When New York's Catholic churches reopened for Mass in late spring 2020, the exact dates varied from region to region based on infection rates – but there was a consistency in the experience if not the exact timing. Fr. Eric Raaser, pastor of St. Margaret's in Pearl River, refers to it as “that big disappointment in June.”

“Everybody, including myself, thought that the churches were going to be mobbed, with people standing outside waiting to get in,” he says. “Those numbers were way, way below the expectations of every pastor I talked to.” Turnout was low despite herculean efforts at sanitizing, marking pews to maintain social distancing requirements and educating the public about the measures being taken, including a strict “no mask, no Mass” rule. Respectable numbers of worshippers showed up, but no throngs.

In the ensuing weeks, attendance inched upward, but in many parishes it still hovers around 50% of the pre-pandemic number. Fr. Raaser estimates St. Margaret's overall attendance at around 550 now in a good week; in 2019, the number was closer to 1,200.

The Fear Factor

Fr. Jose Cruz, pastor of Our Lady Queen of Martyrs in Inwood, talks to many parishioners who are still afraid of returning. “With Covid-19, a lot of our worst nightmares came true. A lot of people are still living in fear,” he said. “I know parishioners who are afraid even to go to the supermarket to buy groceries, but they have to. They say, ‘Father, I need to go to Mass but I am afraid.’” Fr. Cruz doesn't pressure these worshippers: “I tell them, ‘Taking care of your life is something that you have to do. Because life comes from God.’”

The pandemic has been hard on Fr. Cruz's community. “We all in one way or another have been affected and touched by this pandemic,” he says, but he still urges everyone to come back to Mass as soon as they can safely do so. “When we get used to following the



Mass for Life at St. Charles, Staten Island. Photo by Mary DiBiase Blaiich.

WEIGHING RISKS

For New Yorkers still deciding when to return to Mass, the decision may seem bewildering. We asked ArchCare's **Dr. Mona Rao and Dr. Walid Michelen** to help us answer some basic questions that might help readers decide.

How has the Archdiocese of New York arrived at its practices regarding in-person Mass attendance?

The archdiocese bases its decisions on guidance from public health authorities and medical experts. “The basic principle guiding a return to in-person parish activities has to be safety,” Dr. Rao says. “We have to account for the person who is the most vulnerable. At this point, that means practicing social distancing and wearing a mask, as well as good hand hygiene and the disinfecting of high-touch surfaces.”

Is there a risk to individual parishioners in returning to in-person Masses and other parish activities?

“There is a chance of exposure in any congregate setting, whether that's attending Mass, dining in a restaurant, or going to the grocery store,” says Dr. Michelen, “but there are precautions we can all take to make these activities as safe as possible.” To a significant extent, in the Archdiocese of New York, this risk is being managed at the parish level by requiring the strict observance of health protocols.

That said, Dr. Rao observes, “Seniors and those with pre-existing medical conditions are most vulnerable to COVID-19 and, if exposed, are at risk for severe disease.” Individuals with these risk factors may want to consult with their doctors before returning to Mass.

Once someone has been fully vaccinated, is there any reason not to return to in-person Mass?

According to researchers, fully vaccinated people have very little risk of becoming seriously ill with Covid-19. “All of the approved vaccines are effective, and they all offer protection against severe disease,” Dr. Rao says.

But vaccinated individuals should still wear masks and observe social distancing in public – partly because researchers do not yet know for sure whether they can still pick up the virus and pass it to others. “We need to keep one another safe until a critical mass of people are vaccinated and we have achieved herd immunity,” Dr. Michelen says. “This means continuing to follow safety guidelines, even after you've been vaccinated.”

Photo by: Chris Sheridan



Photo by: Chris Sheridan

Masses at home, something is lacking deep down: the spiritual connection that brings God through the community... The risk that we face right now is getting used to having everything remote – the idea that your faith is not connected to others.”

Comfort Zone

For some, on the other hand, the fear and risk may have subsided and been replaced by a kind of inertia. “People are going to sporting events, going to the local pubs and restaurants,” Fr. Raaser observes. At that point, if someone is not returning to Mass, they may be drifting away from the faith.

“A lot of people don't want to be bothered,” he says, so they just watch Mass at home. “Parents don't want to fight with the kids... We have wonderful families here, with three, four, five, sometimes six kids. To get everybody to church on time, it must be craziness.” Unfortunately, “The longer that we're out of the obligation to go, the harder it is for people to readjust and get back to what they want to do.”

And the easier it is to forget that, as Catholics, “We need the Eucharist for survival, for nourishment. It's the source and summit of all our worship.”



Photo by: Ricardo Paiba



Photo by: Maria Bastone

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A moment of prayer in Crestwood, June 2020, during the Corpus Christi procession at Annunciation/Our Lady of Fatima parish; taking the Body of Christ to the streets in Crestwood; distributing Communion at St. Francis de Sales, Manhattan; a January 2021 Mass commemorating St. Elizabeth Seton at St. Peter's, lower Manhattan; floor marker at Our Lady of Pity, Staten Island.

Bringing Them Back

“We have a huge job ahead of us,” Fr. Cruz says. In order to bring back the faithful, he adds, “We will need to re-group and use tools that we might not have used before – social media, Facebook, YouTube – not just to get a message out, but to invite the people and welcome them back home. To me, this is very important: This is our home. So we all belong here.”

The first challenge will be to overcome irrational fear. “Jesus says, ‘Be not afraid,’ right?” Fr. Bancroft points out. “The devil wants people to be afraid. He wants to keep people away from the Eucharist. He works through fear, but God works through love, and perfect love casts out fear. Perfect love for our Lord and the Eucharist will bring us back to Mass and give us peace.”

New Yorkers who are already back attending Mass can tell you that parishes are looking out for the community’s health, rigorously following safety protocols. Some worshippers worry that, if too many came back, they would be crowded unsafely in the churches. In some parishes, to the pastors’ satisfaction, this is indeed becoming an issue – but fortunately, there are plans in place to address it.

“The strategy I’ve been using has just been to offer more times and more options so that people can have room to spread out,” Fr. Bancroft says. As more worshippers return, he’ll be ready. “If I had our full number show up again this coming weekend, I would be more than happy, as I would be adding on Masses – driving myself bald, but it would be worth it because it would be bringing Jesus to people.”

What’s Missing

Pastors and clergy all over the archdiocese are reaching out to parishioners via livestream, bulletins, Flocknote and social media – and through in-person encounters in stores or on the streets – to answer questions and remind them why it’s important to come back.

Fr. Bancroft recounted a phone conversation he had with one family at St.

“
Each of us has a specific role
to fulfill in the Body of Christ
that has been set apart for us
since before time.”

FR. HARTLEY BANCROFT, ST. JOSEPH’S, MILLBROOK

Joseph’s. “They were saying, ‘We’ve been making sure to watch a Mass on TV, but we feel like something’s missing.’ And I said to them, ‘Quite honestly, there is something missing. There’s something very different about watching someone on TV and really being in their presence – which is what happens at Mass. Because we believe that God is on that altar, present with us as Jesus.’ And ... they realized, ‘Yes, that’s right. We want to be back there with Jesus.’”

In addition to the Presence of Christ, there is the all-important sacrament of the Eucharist, which is **only available in person**. At St. Margaret’s, Fr. Raaser posed the question in a recent Flocknote column, “When was the last time you received the Lord in Holy Communion?” “For some, it’s been over a year now,” he said. “When I talk to kids in the school, I ask them that question, and if it’s months or years, that’s the tragedy of it.”

On the other hand, he adds, “This could be a great opportunity, when the people do start coming back to Mass, to reeducate them in what the Mass is all about, and the meaning of the Eucharist.”

Members of the Body

In Our Lady Queen of Martyrs parish, Fr. Cruz evangelizes at every opportunity. These days, that happens on a regular basis at the supermarket. “People recognize me – ‘Oh, Father!’ – and right away they are asking me questions. Sometimes I go just for bread and milk, something that I could do in five minutes, and I am there for half an hour or 45 minutes,” he said. “Maybe they say, ‘Hey, Father, I haven’t been to Mass’ and I say, ‘Well, I want to see you there. Remember, God is there, and he would like you to visit his house.’ ... I feel it works best when you just touch people’s hearts and they feel welcomed and invited.”

“We are not islands to be isolated. We need others,” Fr. Cruz emphasizes, echoing the Trappist monk and writer Thomas Merton. “So don’t be afraid to go to Mass, because in the church we will take care of you, number one. And number two, you will discover that when we are together, we know that we are all connected. Let us all take this opportunity to support one another.”

If you are absent from Mass, the loss is not just *what* you are missing from God and your fellow Christians – it’s

also *that* you are missing from the community. Fr. Bancroft reminds us: “Each of us is a member of Christ. Each of us has a specific role to fulfill in the Body of Christ that has been set apart for us since before time. So when we cut ourselves off from him, even without intending to, we’re missing out on fulfilling that special mission that God has intended for us – and the Church is missing out on having us fulfill it.”

“It’s like a beautiful mosaic missing one of its stones, or a stained glass window missing one of the panels. The window may still be beautiful overall, yet it’s missing something that

would have made it even more beautiful, more complete.”

There is much to be hopeful about now. With each week, more of the faithful are returning. “I can see the light at the end of the tunnel,” Fr. Cruz says. “More people are getting the vaccines, summer is around the corner, and we hope that with the warm weather, the virus spread will slow down. ...

“I can’t wait to see the church packed again. I know that it will take time to get to 100% of capacity. In the meantime, we can get ready. People will come with a lot of questions. They will come hungry and thirsty for God.” ✨



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Worshippers at the Young Adult Mass, December 2020, at St. Patrick’s Cathedral; hand sanitizing and contactless donation station at St. Francis de Sales, Manhattan; Palm Sunday Mass at St. Patrick’s Cathedral; Cardinal Dolan addresses parishioners at St. Clare’s, Staten Island; full safety precautions in place at St. Clare’s; Mass for Life at St. Charles, Staten Island.

RETURN OF THE FAITHFUL: HOMECOMING



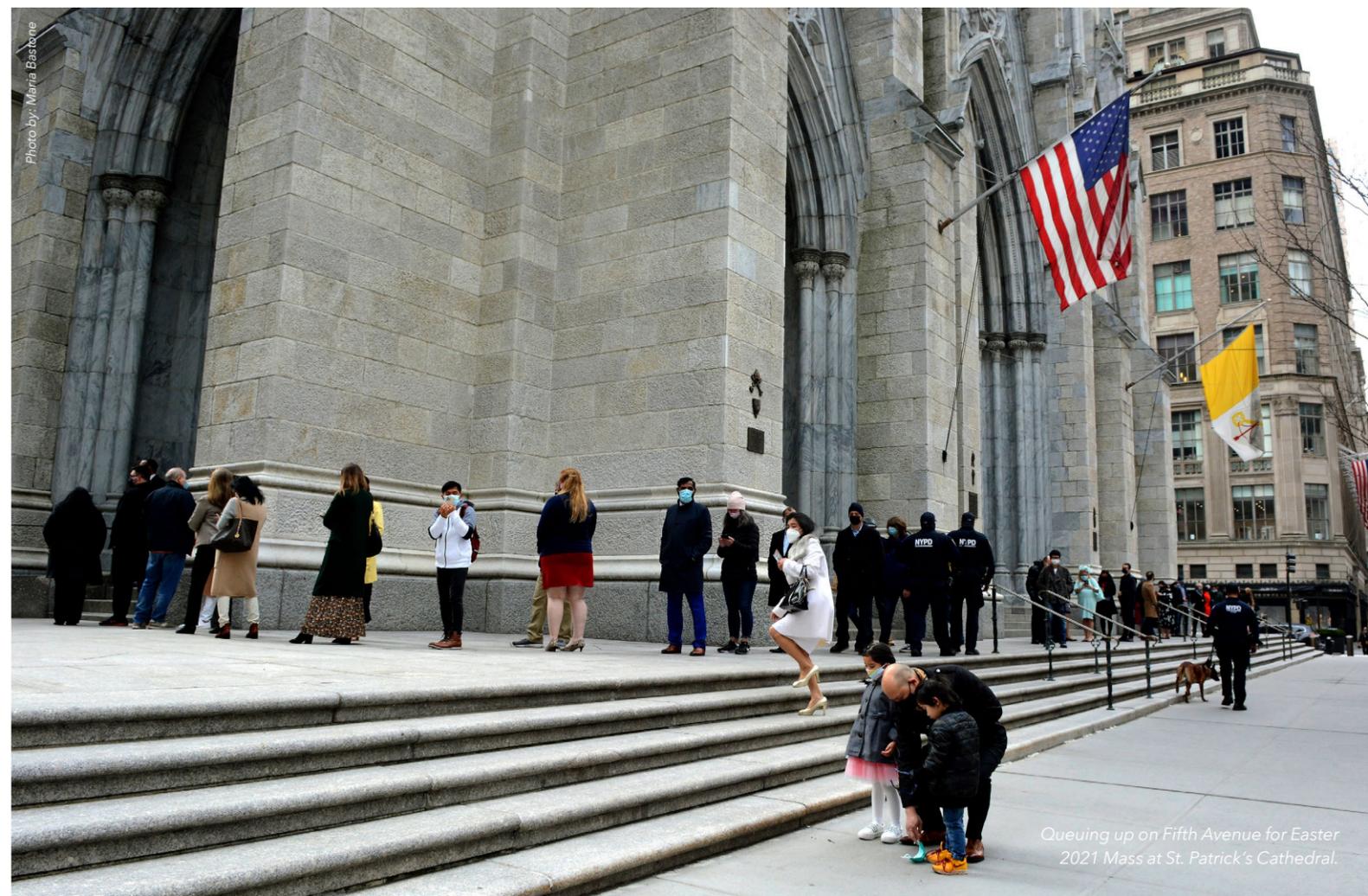
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Leaving Easter Mass at St. Lawrence O'Toole, Brewster; a socially distanced Easter reception in the St. Lawrence O'Toole parish center; at Mass commemorating the 200th anniversary of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton's death, January 2021, at St. Peter's in lower Manhattan; receiving a blessing at St. Patrick's Cathedral, October 2020.

Courtesy of St. Lawrence O'Toole Parish

Photo by: Mary DiBiase Blach



Cardinal Dolan showers the faithful with holy water, Easter Sunday 2021, St. Patrick's Cathedral.



Queuing up on Fifth Avenue for Easter 2021 Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Courtesy of St. Lawrence O'Toole Parish

Photo by: Chris Sheridan

Photo by: Maria Eastone

Photo by: Maria Eastone

Venerable
**PIERRE
TOUSSAINT**

*From slave to successful
New York entrepreneur
– and someday,
perhaps, a saint*

In the summer of 1797,* a wealthy French planter from the colony of St. Domingue – soon to become the independent nation of Haiti – stepped off of a passenger ship in New York Harbor. He was accompanied by a few family members and a handful of West African house slaves. Among the latter was a tall, mild-mannered teenager destined to become a legend. His name was Pierre Toussaint.

Toussaint arrived in the fledgling United States – George Washington had only recently stepped down as president – at a time when much of the world seemed to be turning upside-down. The colony he had sailed from was engulfed by a slave rebellion; in short order, former slaves would become rulers and their masters would be homeless. Many French aristocrats, from St. Domingue and from Europe (where France itself had been upended by revolution), were finding their way to America. There they were free to keep whatever money and valuables they might salvage – including slaves.

In this way, one of the foremost American Catholics of the early 19th century – today, the only lay person buried at St. Patrick's Cathedral on Fifth Avenue – came to New York in the humblest of circumstances, as the slave of a family about to lose its solvency.

A Child of Dual Worlds

At the age of 16, Toussaint had lived his entire life as a Black slave among the French aristocracy. In St. Domingue, he had grown up as a playmate to his

master's children, reared in the social niceties. He had been trained to greet and serve guests graciously. His command of the French language, spoken and written, was superb.

At the same time, Toussaint was one of half a million Black slaves who toiled for the benefit of some 32,000 French inhabitants of St. Domingue. The uprising that put an end to this injustice was hard-fought and bloody, and raged for years in the colony where he grew up.

In later years, Toussaint was reluctant to speak about the horrors he had witnessed, and hesitant to join the abolition debate in America because of the terrible cost he knew had been paid to end slavery in Haiti. Though he would die before emancipation came to the United States, he did obtain his own freedom in 1807, and worked quietly on behalf of his fellow Black New Yorkers, especially children, until his death in 1853.

From Slave to Entrepreneur

Soon after the family had settled into a fashionable rental house in lower Manhattan, Toussaint's mas-

ter, Jean Jacques Bérard, signed the slave up to apprentice as a hairdresser. It was a smart move in a city where wealthy society women required elaborate hairdos for social engagements several times a week. From the outset, Toussaint was allowed to keep much of what he earned at his new trade.

In 1801, Bérard died, his once-extravagant fortune nearly wiped out. Within a year or two, his widow, Madame Bérard, was unable to pay her creditors. By then, however, Toussaint was earning enough as a hairdresser to assume financial responsibility for the household. Still a slave, he served tea, did the chores, and paid the bills until his mistress freed him on her deathbed in 1807.

After burying Madame Bérard, Toussaint used his hairdressing money to purchase his sister's freedom from another master. He also purchased the freedom of his fiancée, Juliette Noel, whom he had known in St. Domingue. The couple wed and moved into a smaller house on Reade Street, where they began a life whose charitable ripples are still moving through the New York community – and the world.

***A note about dates:** Many books and articles about Pierre Toussaint, following the lead of memoirist Hannah Sawyer Lee, state that he was born in 1766 and arrived in New York in 1787. While Lee's memoir is reliable in most respects, these dates are speculative and probably incorrect. In this account, *Archways* has used dates based on the research of journalist Arthur Jones for his book *Pierre Toussaint: A Biography* (2003).

Man of Means, and of God

Toussaint's hard work and generous spirit soon brought him significant wealth and a kind of provisional acceptance at the highest levels of New York society.

As a Black man, he was forced to navigate with care the streets of his adopted city, where free Black people might be attacked by bigots or kidnapped by slave traffickers and sold back into bondage. He was also vulnerable as a Catholic, since anti-Catholic prejudice was rampant.

As an entrepreneur and an acknowledged master of his trade, however, he was welcomed into the drawing rooms of New York's elite families. There he was counted as not just a hairdresser but also a valued friend and counselor.

The wife and daughter of Alexander Hamilton were among his clients, as were numerous other prominent New Yorkers. These mostly Protestant women deeply admired Toussaint's Catholic piety and kindness, and many corresponded with him fre-

quently. One of them, the prominent socialite Mary Anna Sawyer Schuyler, became a close friend. She addressed him in letters as "my Saint Pierre."

Parish of Saints

From his first days in New York, Toussaint was a parishioner at St. Peter's on Barclay Street, where he attended Mass daily for decades. There, he became a significant benefactor and fundraiser. Though his good works were by no means limited to church finances, his largesse did contribute significantly to the growth of the Church in New York.

In 1805, a young widow and mother named Elizabeth Bayley Seton converted to Catholicism and joined the congregation at St. Peter's. A few years later, she moved to Maryland to start America's first Catholic girls school and found the Sisters of Charity, the first community of women religious in the United States. Then in 1816, at the request of St. Peter's pastor, she sent a group of sisters to open an orphanage

in New York. (The Catholic Church declared Mother Seton a saint in 1975.)

Though there is no evidence that Seton ever met Toussaint, he was instrumental in raising funds for the new Sisters of Charity orphanage, in spite of the fact that it served only white children. Meanwhile, Toussaint used his home to shelter homeless, parentless Black children. Pierre and Juliette used their own money to raise and educate these young charges.

Devoted to the Beatitudes

For decades, tirelessly, Toussaint dedicated himself to service, to delivering the mercy of Christ to those in need. In addition to his charitable work, he routinely put in 12-plus-hour days at his trade, walking the streets from stately home to stately home to dress the hair of the fashionable – all in order to have more to share with the poor and the troubled.

Hannah Sawyer Lee, Toussaint's first biographer and the sister of his close friend Mary Anna Schuyler,

“
It must not be supposed that Toussaint's charity consisted merely in bestowing money; he felt the moral greatness of doing good, of giving counsel to the weak and courage to the timid, of reclaiming the vicious, and above all, of comforting the sick and sorrowful.
 ”

HANNAH SAWYER LEE, MEMOIR OF PIERRE TOUSSAINT, 1854



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: The interior of St. Peter's on Barclay Street, where Toussaint attended Mass for more than 50 years; the façade of Old St. Patrick's Cathedral, circa 1820; the Great New York Fire of 1835, which wiped out much of Toussaint's wealth; Pierre, Juliette and their adopted daughter Euphemie Toussaint, as painted in miniatures by artist Anthony Meucci, circa 1825.



gives us a close-up account of his virtue in *Memoir of Pierre Toussaint, Born a Slave in St. Domingo*. "He often quoted in his native language from the Sermon on the Mount," she recalled, "and the Beatitudes seemed to have found their way into his heart."

Whenever he was not at work, it seems, Toussaint was giving food to the hungry, sheltering the homeless, welcoming the stranger, comforting the grieving, visiting the imprisoned and the sick. The hairdresser's response to the frequent outbreaks of yellow fever in New York seem especially heroic in light of our current dealings with the scourge of Covid-19. Toussaint had seen plenty of yellow fever during his youth in Haiti. He knew its deadly power, but did not shy from helping those in its grip.

Lee writes of one case in her memoir of Toussaint: "When the yellow fever prevailed in New York, by degrees Maiden Lane was almost wholly deserted, and almost every house in it closed. One poor woman, prostrated by the terrible disorder, remained there with little or no attendance, till Toussaint, day by day, came through the lonely street, crossed the barri-

ades, entered the deserted house where she lay, and performed the nameless offices of a nurse, fearlessly exposing himself to the contagion."

A Man for Others

Through the 1820s and early 1830s, Toussaint's wealth grew steadily through constant work. When a friend observed that the hairdresser had accumulated enough money to retire in comfort, he replied, "Madam, I have enough for myself, but if I stop work, I have not enough for others."

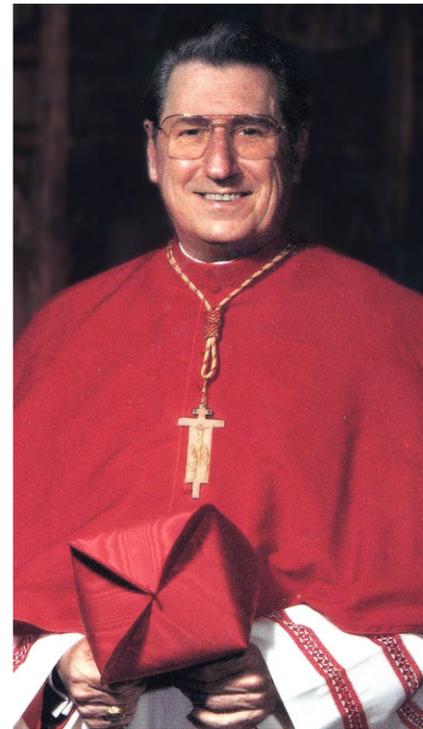
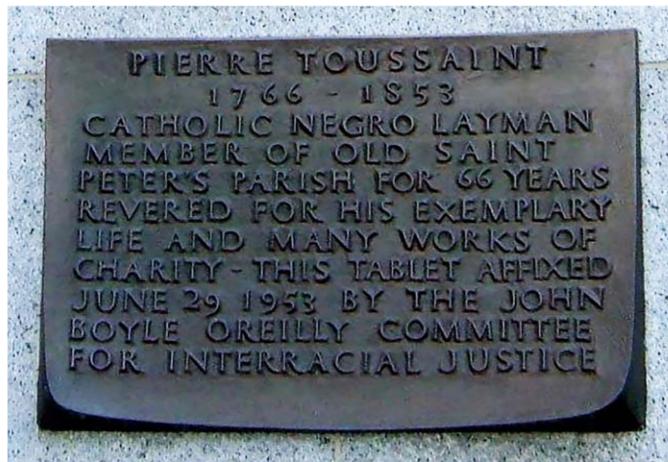
In 1835, the Great New York Fire raged through lower Manhattan's warehouses, destroying hundreds of buildings. It is believed that Toussaint lost investments totaling \$900,000 in today's dollars. With reduced means, he carried on with his charitable works, funding orphanages and other Catholic institutions, including the first Catholic school for Black children.

Racism, too, remained all too real. In the America of the 1840s, moving inexorably toward civil war, New York no longer permitted slavery, but prejudice and violence against Blacks were common. This hit home for Toussaint in 1842 when, at the cathedral now

known as Old St. Patrick's on Mulberry Street, he and his family were turned away because of his race by ushers unaware of his VIP status. Cathedral trustees rushed to apologize as soon as they learned of the slight, but they could not undo what had happened – at a church whose construction he had helped fund.

The next decade was one of gradual physical decline for Toussaint, even as his spirit seemed to soar ever closer to God. In 1851, his beloved wife and partner Juliette died and was buried in the cemetery of St. Patrick's Old Cathedral beside their adoptive daughter Euphémie, who had died two decades earlier. Surrounded by Black friends, Toussaint marched from the funeral at St. Peter's to the burial site on Mulberry Street, where his many white friends, clients and admirers joined the mourners to pay their respects.

After her death, he grew increasingly inactive and bedridden. Pierre Toussaint died on June 30, 1853. Two days before, his last recorded words were "God is with me" – and then, when asked if he wanted anything, "Nothing on Earth."



“
If ever a man was truly free, it was Pierre Toussaint. ... If ever a man was a saint, in my judgment, it was Pierre Toussaint. ... No one can read this man's life – and the records are thoroughly authentic – without being awed by his holiness.
 ”

CARDINAL JOHN J. O'CONNOR, ARCHBISHOP OF NEW YORK 1984–2000

A Servant at Rest

Having come into this world as a slave, Pierre Toussaint left it as a man of substance, well known in Manhattan and widely admired for his charitable work. “High Mass, incense, candles, rich robes, sad and solemn music. ... The Church gave all it could give, to prince or noble,” Eliza Hamilton Schuyler, daughter-in-law of Mary Anna Schuyler, wrote in describing Toussaint's funeral at St. Peter's. “The body of the church was well filled with men, women, children, nuns, and charity sisters; likewise ... people of his own color, all in mourning. Around stood many of the white race, with their eyes glistening with emotion.”

New York's newspapers also took note of Toussaint's passing with extravagant praises. “His charity was of the efficient character which did not content itself with a present relief of pecuniary aid,” said one obituary, “but which required time and thought by day and by night, and long watchfulness and kind attention at the bedside of the sick and the departing.”

“For sixty years,” wrote the *Home Journal*, “he attended Mass at six in the morning, as punctual as a clock, until prostrated by illness. His days and nights were given to visits, ministrations to the sick, attendance upon the bereaved, and attempts to reform the erring and console the afflicted.”

Toussaint had managed the remarkable feat of moving with equal grace and generosity in the disparate worlds



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A plaque commemorating Pierre Toussaint on St. Peter's Church in lower Manhattan; scholars of the Pierre Toussaint Scholarship Fund, 2019; students at the College Pierre Toussaint in Sassier, Haiti.

of wealthy New York society, displaced French nobility, and free and enslaved Blacks, showing equal love, respect and Christian mercy to all. As the service ended, Toussaint's many white friends and associates stood back – honoring a request he had made at the time of Juliette's burial – to let members of the Black community bear him out of St. Peter's and through the streets to the cemetery of St. Patrick's on Mulberry Street. There, Black and white, rich and poor commingled again in prayer as their beloved Toussaint was laid to rest beside his wife and adopted daughter.

Beyond the Grave

The decades following Toussaint's death were tumultuous ones in New

York and all over America. Amid the political turmoil leading up to the Civil War and the unsettled times that followed, his story faded in the public memory. Were it not for the efforts of Hannah Sawyer Lee, whose *Memoir of Pierre Toussaint* stitched together details of his extraordinary life from notes left behind by her sister, Mary Anna Schuyler, and a variety of other sources, we would likely have a scant awareness of Toussaint today.

For nearly a century, the legend of the former slave who managed to achieve financial and social success while leading a life of unsurpassed Christian piety was kept alive as oral history in the Haitian-American and Black Catholic communities.

Then, in 1938, a 9-year-old Black religious education student challenged an 18-year-old seminarian named Charles McTague to name one Black Catholic who had been respected by white people. Looking for an answer, McTague learned about Toussaint. Eventually, doing some follow-up research, he was able to locate the Toussaint family gravestone – on which the faded lettering had become illegible to the naked eye – in the cemetery on Mulberry Street. The discovery catalyzed a movement.

In 1951, Cardinal Francis Spellman blessed a plaque to mark the headstone, and in 1968 his successor, Cardinal Terrence Cook, formally initiated Toussaint's case (or “cause,” in canonical parlance) for canonization. After more than two decades of exhaustive research and due diligence by the Pierre Toussaint Guild, the cause was submitted to the Vatican. Pope St. John Paul II declared Toussaint “venerable” in 1997.

Meanwhile, in 1989, Cardinal John O'Connor had arranged for the hairdresser's remains (which had to be exhumed as part of the canonization process) to be relocated to a vault be-

neath the altar of St. Patrick's Cathedral. Toussaint is the only lay person ever accorded this honor. At a 1999 Mass in Toussaint's honor, O'Connor said, “He is now buried beneath this high altar with all of the bishops, archbishops and cardinals of New York. It will be a great privilege for me to be buried in a vault in the same section with Pierre Toussaint.”

A Legacy of Service

In the process of canonization, after a candidate has been declared venerable, the Church requires evidence of two genuine miracles before a declaration of sainthood. In his 1999 homily, O'Connor acknowledged this but emphasized that there is no need to wait for canonization to extoll Toussaint's example of Christian mercy. “Beatified or not, Pierre Toussaint remains a wonderful model,” he said, “and I wish he were here.”

His legacy today is alive and well in the Archdiocese of New York. The Pierre Toussaint Guild, instrumental in his cause for sainthood, also helps to broadcast his inspiring story to the world. The Pierre Toussaint Scholarship Fund, administered by

the archdiocese's Black Ministry Office, carries on his mission to provide education and improvement opportunities to young people, providing financial grants, mentorship and opportunities for students at all levels to develop their faith as well as their careers. The foundation also supports the College Pierre Toussaint in Sassier, Haiti, creating opportunities for young Haitians to gain the skills to serve their community.

In his lifetime, Toussaint was respected as a devout and holy man. People came to him – Black, white, rich, poor – to ask him not only to help them in their need but also to advise them and pray for them. In the words of Fr. Quinn, who eulogized Toussaint at his funeral in 1853, he was “one who always had wise counsel for the rich and words of encouragement for the poor.”

Today, in a world that seems to worship the vain and self-serving, we could use some of Toussaint's counsel and encouragement. Indeed, we could do worse than to emulate the former slave from Haiti who lived to serve God and others, and came to embody so strikingly the love and mercy of Jesus Christ. ✱

THE WORDS THAT INSPIRE US

Words, millions of them, swirl around us every day. Some are frivolous, some provocative, some hurtful, some kind. They can inform us, inflate us, deflate us, carry us to faraway places or forgotten times. They may be spoken, sung, printed, broadcast, handwritten or displayed on a glowing screen, and we can read, hear or ignore them.

Amid the torrent, we look for passages – readings, songs, poems, fragments of text or verse – that we can circle back to: the ones that inspire us, enlighten us, center us, bring us closer to God. These are words we lean on. They run through our heads when we're out for a walk or doing chores or drifting off to sleep.

Archways wants to know your go-to texts of wisdom, faith and joy. To get you started, we gathered some springtime suggestions from priests, religious and music directors.

Acts of the Apostles 8:26–39

*Recommended by: Fr. George Hafemann
Pastor, St. John the Evangelist, Goshen*

“This favorite Scripture passage tells the story of the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch. Would that we all had the fervent faith of this man.”

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road – the desert road – that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means “queen of the Ethiopians”). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.”

Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked.

“How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading:

*“He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,
and as a lamb before its shearer is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.
In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.
Who can speak of his descendants?
For his life was taken from the earth.”*

The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?” Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?” Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” The eunuch answered, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” And he gave orders to stop



The Baptism of the Eunuch by Rembrandt, 1626.

the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

**“A Prayer Poem”
by C.S. Lewis***

*Recommended by Fr. Anthony Mastrolia
Pastor, St. Clare, Staten Island*

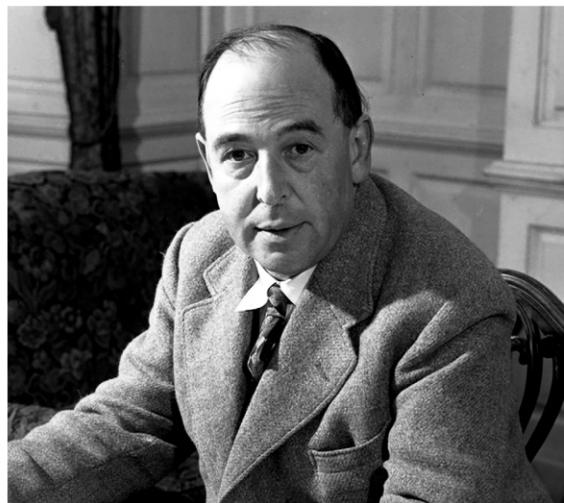
Master, they say that when I seem
To be in speech with you,
Since you make no replies, it's all a dream
– One talker aping two.

They are half right, but not as they
Imagine; rather, I
Seek in myself the things I meant to say,
And lo! the wells are dry.

Then, seeing me empty, you forsake
The Listener's role, and through
My dead lips breathe and into utterance wake
The thoughts I never knew.

And thus you neither need reply
Nor can; thus, while we seem
Two talking, thou art One forever, and I
No dreamer, but thy dream.

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Christian novelist C.S. Lewis.

**From Letters: Book 7,
by Blessed Clelia Merloni**



Cardinal Dolan before a portrait of Blessed Clelia Merloni
at a Mass in her honor at St. Patrick's Cathedral, February 2019.

*Recommended by Sr. Cora Lombardo, ASCJ
Director of Religious Education, Immaculate
Conception/Assumption, Tuckahoe*

“Blessed Clelia captures the challenge we all face of not just finding Jesus in other people, but of really loving them, even when they don't return the favor of doing good for good. She focuses it for us and identifies this as the Way of the Cross that becomes the Way to heaven.”

Apply yourselves then with a generous heart to do all with the greatest perfection gazing on the image of God in your neighbor whoever he or she may be, who because of this, will become in your eyes the object of your most tender concerns even to feeling the joy of rendering them good for evil. Endure everything, forgive everything, love always even though they may hate us. You can be sure that if you do this, you will advance, with giant steps, along the narrow way of the great Saints.



**From Maxims and Sayings
of St. Philip Neri**

*Recommended by Br. Steven Neier
New York Oratory of St. Philip Neri, Sparkill*

“The essential thing to do is to give oneself totally to God. He who wants anything other than Christ does not know what he wants.”

“The Holy Spirit is the teacher of prayer. He enables us to live in constant peace and constant joy, which is a foretaste of paradise.”

“My Jesus if you want me, cut the fetters that keep me from you.”

“One should not wish to do everything in one day, or to become a saint in four days, but step by step.”



“Now the Green Blade Riseth,” by John Macleod Campbell Crum

*Recommended by Dr. Jennifer Donelson
Director of Liturgical Music, St. Joseph’s Seminary, Yonkers*

“The strong ties between Easter and the coming of springtime in the Northern Hemisphere lend themselves to rich imagery that augments our natural anticipation for the end of winter and for the victory of Christ over death. This hymn wonderfully illustrates the analogy between the death and resurrection of Our Lord and the promise of Jesus that if the ‘grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies ... it produces much fruit’ (John 12:24). The text is commonly set to the charming and evocative French carol tune ‘Noel Nouvelet,’ which has elements of both major and minor keys, capturing the giving way of shadow to light in the spring and the conquering of life over death in the resurrection.”



Dr. Jennifer Donelson at the chapel organ of St. Joseph’s Seminary.

Now the green blade riseth, from the buried grain,
Wheat that in dark earth many days has lain;
Love lives again, that with the dead has been:
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.

In the grave they laid Him, Love who had been slain,
Thinking that He never would awake again,
Laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen:
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.

Forth He came at Easter, like the risen grain,
Jesus who for three days in the grave had lain;
Quick from the dead the risen One is seen:
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.

When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,
Jesus’ touch can call us back to life again,
Fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.

“Veni Sancte Spiritus” (“Come Holy Spirit”), attributed to Pope Innocent III

*Recommended by Dr. Jennifer Pascual
Director of Music, St. Patrick’s Cathedral*

“On Easter and Pentecost Sundays, sequences (nonbiblical, sacred poetic texts) are required to be sung or recited just prior to the singing of the Alleluia and Gospel verse during Mass. While in the 16th century hundreds of sequences were in use, only a handful are still permitted today. For Pentecost, ‘Veni Sancti Spiritus’ caps off the Easter season and helps draw the faithful more deeply into the mysteries celebrated on this important day of the Church year. Click to hear it as a **chant** (start at 54’11”) and in a **choral setting** by Mozart.”

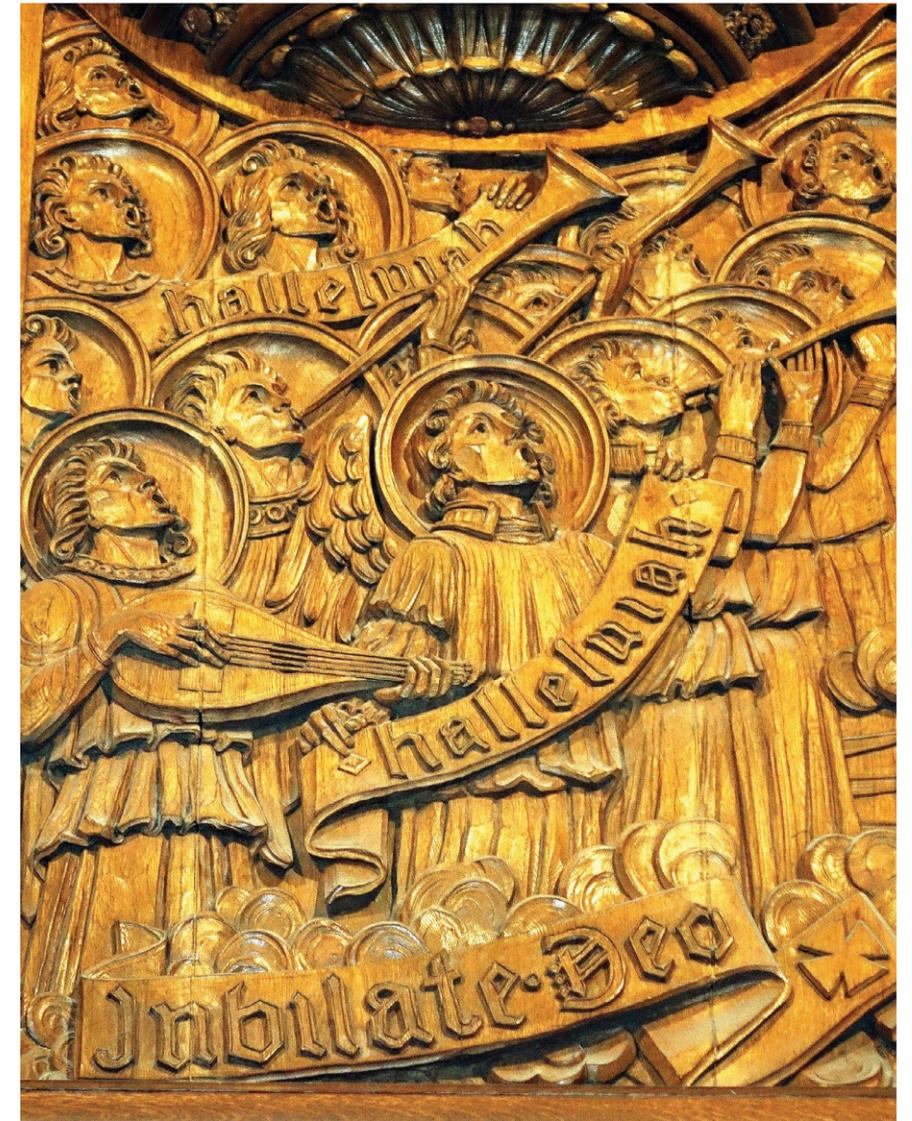
Come, Holy Spirit,
and send down from heaven
the ray of your light.
Come, father of the poor,
come, giver of gifts,
come, light of the hearts.

Best consoler,
sweet host of the soul,
sweet refresher.
Rest in work,
cooling in heat,
comfort in crying.

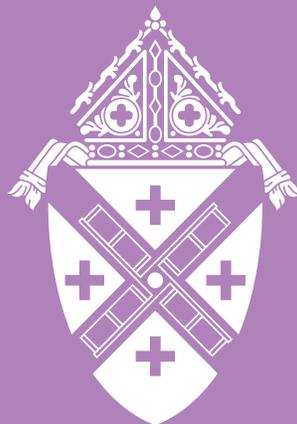
O most blessed light,
fill the innermost hearts
of your faithful.
Without your power
nothing is in man,
nothing innocent.

Clean what is dirty,
water what is dry,
heal what is wounded.
Bend what is rigid,
heat what is cold,
lead what has gone astray.

Grant to your faithful
who trust in you,
your sevenfold holy gift.
Grant us the reward of virtue,
grant us final salvation,
grant us eternal joy.
Amen. Alleluia.



A detail from the carved wood facade of the great pipe organ at St. Patrick’s Cathedral.



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