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Black Saints: James, Alexander, and Patrick Healy

NCR Today
Black Saints

Nov. 16 James, Alexander, and Patrick Healy

Did you know that the very first African American priests in the United States were three brothers born of a slave mother and fathered by a Georgia plantation owner?

The Healy Brothers: James, Alexander, and Patrick were sent north for their education and freedom. Because of the adverse racial climate in 19th century America, the Healy brothers had to be ordained in Europe, beginning with James in 1854; Alexander, in 1858; and Patrick, in 1864. James Augustine Healy later became our nation's first African American bishop in Portland, Maine, in 1875. A year later, Patrick Francis Healy, became the highly regarded president of the Catholic institution, Georgetown University, here in Washington DC. Ironically, Georgetown did not admit students of color, until the mid-1900

More about Black Catholic history

Blacks in Catholic Christianity have a long and vibrant history.

Much of that history is generally unknown to Black Catholics as well as to the rest of the faithful. On July 24, 1990, the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus of the United States designated November as Black Catholic History Month to celebrate this long history and proud heritage of Black Catholics. During this month we celebrate the presence of our ancestors who kept the faith and are models of living the Gospel life.

November is Black Catholic History Month.

Sign up for our daily Black Catholic Saints email during the month of November to learn more about these holy men and women.

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