

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

November 20, 2013 at 9:00am

Black Saints: Augustus Tolton

NCR Today
Black Saints

Nov. 20 Augustus Tolton

Did you know Augustus Tolton, was the first publicly known black Roman Catholic priest in the United States (1886)?

A former slave who was baptized and reared Catholic, Tolton studied formally in Rome, because he was rejected from American seminary. Fr. Tolton was ordained and served his first Mass on Easter Sunday at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Assigned to the Alton, Ill. diocese, Tolton first ministered to his home parish in Quincy. Later assigned to Chicago, Tolton led the development and construction of St. Monica's Catholic Church as a black "national parish church", completed in 1893 on Chicago's south side.

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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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Nov 26, 2013

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Nov 25, 2013

Black Saints: Origen

Nov 24, 2013

Black Saints: Toussaint L'Ouverture

Nov 23, 2013

Black Saints: Anthony of Alexandria

Nov 22, 2013

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