



ignatius press

November 10, 2006

Dear Editor, Reporter, News Director or Producer:

November is designated as National Black Catholic History month, since it holds a number of saints' feast days important to Catholics of African descent – such as St. Martin de Porres (Nov. 3) and St. Augustine (Nov. 13). And here is a newly released book about one of the most celebrated black Catholic priests in American history – though he does not yet have a Catholic feast day assigned to him.

Born a slave and condemned to a lifetime of horrendous injustice, Fr. Augustine Tolton became the first black priest in the United States. Even in death, he was buried in a plot below the level of other graves in St. Peter's Cemetery in Quincy, Illinois – so that eventually another priest's coffin could be placed above his.

No American Catholic seminary would accept him because of his race, but through God's grace and several helpful Catholic clergy, he studied for the priesthood in Rome and was ordained there in 1886. He was assigned to work again in the U.S., and eventually became pastor of St. Monica's Catholic Church in Chicago. Large crowds sought his 'classes of inquiry,' and jammed Sunday Masses resulted in the coming together of people of both races in his church. But his priestly life would only last 11 years – he died of heatstroke in July 1897.

In just over a century since his death, there have been many changes for American blacks. Although Fr. Tolton's efforts at attaining justice for himself personally and for his fellow blacks seemed to meet failure at every turn, he eventually did triumph in spirit. It helped pave the way for triumphs for his people.

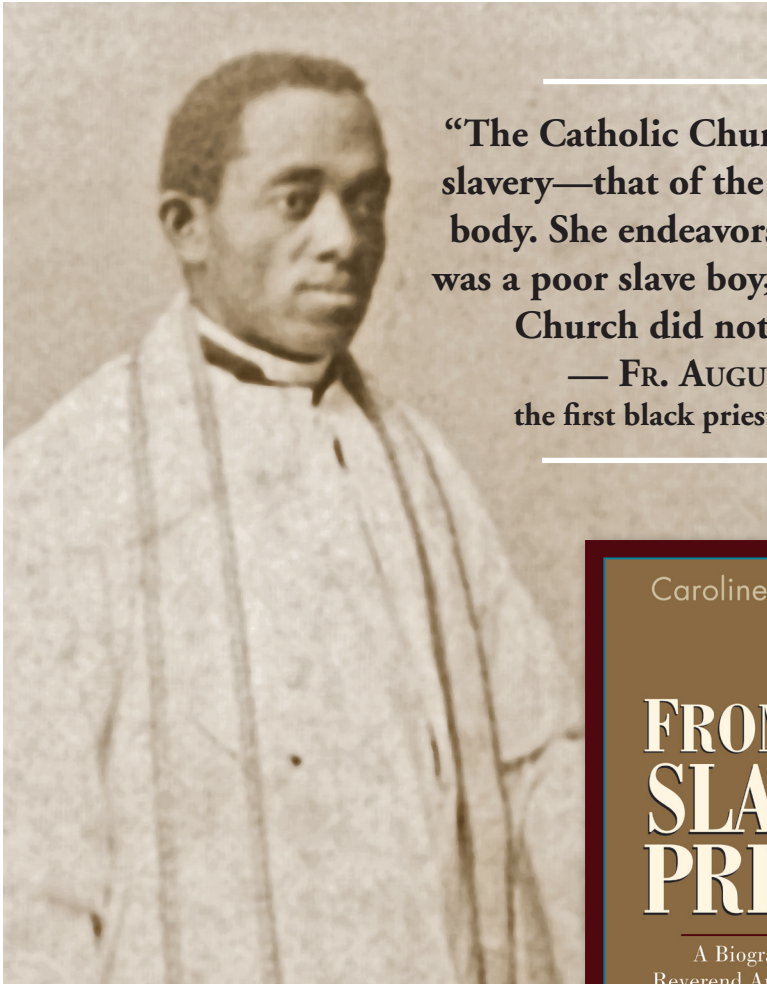
Please consider coverage of this very moving and true story of Fr. Augustine Tolton, and contact me if you'd like an interview with the spokesman for the book, Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers – a black Catholic deacon who has been hugely inspired by Fr. Tolton. Deacon Burke-Sivers wrote the new Foreword to the book, and he currently hosts the EWTN TV series, "Behold The Man" – a popular new program on male spirituality.

Yours very sincerely,

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A Division of Guadalupe Associates, Inc.

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“The Catholic Church deplores a double slavery—that of the mind and that of the body. She endeavors to free us of both. I was a poor slave boy, but the priests of the Church did not disdain me . . .”

— FR. AUGUSTINE TOLTON,
the first black priest of the United States

“Sister Caroline Hemesath’s biography, makes a welcome reappearance from Ignatius Press. This is a life that for all its accomplishments on behalf of a specific minority, imitates closely the life of our Lord Himself... Everyone will be moved by his story, and I especially urge young Catholics to read the book, and learn from Father Tolton, just how much a life can mean, and how much God can accomplish through us, if we are willing.”

— WILTON D. GREGORY,
Archbishop of Atlanta

Caroline Hemesath

FROM
SLAVE to
PRIEST

A Biography of the
Reverend Augustine Tolton
(1854-1897)
The First Black Priest

IGNATIUS

Fr. Augustine Tolton (1854-1897) was the first black priest in the United States. Born into a black Catholic slave family, Fr. Tolton conquered almost insurmountable odds to become a Catholic priest, and at his early death at 43, this pioneer black American priest left behind a shining legacy of holy service to God, the Church and his people.

With the thorough scholarly research and inspirational writing by Sister Caroline Hemesath, the great legacy of this first black priest, and his courage in the face of incredible prejudice within the Church and society, will be a source of strength and hope for modern Christians who face persecution for their faith, especially black Catholics who still experience similar prejudices. In American history, many black people have achieved, against great odds, success and made distinct contributions to our society and their fellowman. But Father Tolton faced a different source of prejudice—an opposition from within the Church, the one institution he should have been able to rely on for compassion and support.

He endured many rebuffs, as a janitor spent long hours in the church chapel in prayer, and attended clandestine classes taught by friendly priests and nuns who saw in his eyes the bright spark of the love of God, devotion to the Church and a determination to serve his people. Denied theological training in America, these friends helped him to receive his priestly education,

and ordination, in Rome. He later became the pastor of St. Monica’s Church in Chicago and established a center at St. Monica’s which was the focal point for the life of black Catholics in Chicago for 30 years.

The author interviewed many people who knew Father Tolton personally, including St. Katharine Drexel, and presents a deeply inspiring portrait of a great American Catholic.

Within this book are various illustrations and photographs.

• 1-58617-097-X • 5 1/4 x 8, Sewn Hardcover
230 pages, Illustrated
Inspiration/Biography • \$17.95

“...Fr. Tolton is certainly an inspiring example of courage and determination in today’s Church, for all of us called to respond to God’s vocation to holiness, and especially those called to the priesthood and religious life. I am sure this book will contribute to making known his witness to unwavering fidelity to Christ: a legacy not only for the American Church, but also for all modern Christians, who face persecution for their faith...”

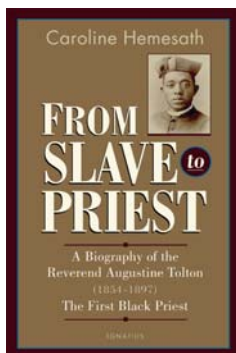
— CARDINAL IVAN DIAS

Prefect, Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples
(Formerly Collegium Propaganda Fide,
which educated Fr. Tolton)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Inspiring biography of first black slave-turned-Catholic-priest re-released by Ignatius Press

SAN FRANCISCO, November 10, 2006 – Born into a black Catholic slave family in 1854, Fr. Augustine Tolton conquered almost insurmountable odds to eventually become the first black Catholic priest in the U.S.

Ignatius Press' new edition of Fr. Tolton's biography, *From Slave To Priest: A Biography of the Reverend Augustine Tolton* (by Sister Caroline Hemesath, SSF) reacquaints the modern world with this great priest, and details the incredible struggle for equality and acceptance faced by black Catholics in the mid- 19th century. The new edition includes a powerful Foreword by acclaimed black Catholic Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers, who hosts the EWTN (Eternal Word Television Network) series on male spirituality, "Behold the Man."

The scholarly research and inspirational life-account by Sr. Caroline Hemesath, SSF (who was a member of the Sisters of St. Francis in Dubuque, Iowa) presents the great and true story of this first Black priest in the U.S., and his courage in the face of incredible prejudice. The author interviewed many people who knew Fr. Tolton personally, including St. Katherine Drexel.

From Slave To Priest is a source of strength and encouragement for present-day Christians, including black Catholics who sometimes still encounter intolerance. Fr. Tolton faced a unique source of prejudice: an opposition from within part of the Church – the one institution he should have been able to rely on for compassion and support.

As well-loved pastor of St. Monica's Church in Chicago, Fr. Tolton was only a priest for 11 years, and died at the early age of 43. But he left an unparalleled legacy of holy service to God and the Catholic Church. He endured slavery, abject poverty, and what was to him a mysterious exclusion from American Catholic seminaries. Several priests and nuns, however, helped him to receive his priestly education, and ordination, in Rome.

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“God ... gave him the strength to exercise his priestly ministry under the weighty yoke of racism,” says Burke-Sivers. “He was a beacon of hope to black Catholics in the nineteenth century who were trying to find a home in the American Church.”

“He endured years of frustration, humiliation, and rejection in a country boasting openness to religious freedom and tolerance,” continues Burke-Sivers. “The life of Fr. Tolton is a study in faithful obedience,” he says, “since the Vatican assigned Fr. Tolton to serve as a missionary priest in the United States, where he was once a slave, an outcast, a hated black. He obeyed in faith ... not the faith of blind obedience ... but in complete humility and generosity.”

But the greatest legacy of Fr. Tolton was really not that he was the first black American priest. It was that “he loved and served the Lord with great fervor and intensity,” says Burke-Sivers. “He was a living testimony to God’s creative, life-giving work.”

Cardinal Ivan Dias, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (Formerly Collegium Propaganda Fide, which educated Fr. Tolton) says, “...Fr. Tolton is certainly an inspiring example of courage and determination in today’s Church, for all of us called to respond to God’s vocation to holiness, and especially those called to the priesthood and religious life. I am sure this book will contribute to making known his witness to unwavering fidelity to Christ: a legacy not only for the American Church, but also for all modern Christians, who face persecution for their faith...”

And Philadelphia’s Cardinal Justin Rigali adds, “While the Civil War ended slavery, it only began the struggle for racial equality. Tolton’s fervent vocational commitment was constantly challenged by prejudice, but he also experienced strong support. His brief priestly ministry was marred by prejudice, yet showed the power of God by the acceptance of both black and white faithful. Tolton’s perseverance in his vocational commitment is an inspiring lesson for us all.”

Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory of Atlanta, former head of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, says, “The life of this holy hero has inspired me since my childhood. ... This is a life that for all its accomplishments on behalf of a specific minority, imitates closely that life of our Lord Himself ... I urge young Catholics to read the book and learn from Fr. Tolton just how much a life can mean, and how much God can accomplish through us if we are willing.”

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San Francisco-based Ignatius Press, founded in 1978, is one of the largest Catholic publishers in the world. Ignatius Press is the primary English-language publisher of Pope Benedict XVI’s books. It is likewise dedicated to publishing and distributing genuine information on the Catholic faith, and publishes over 40 books each year (with over 1,500 titles in print). Its author-roster includes some of the foremost names in the Catholic Church. Ignatius is also the publisher of *Catholic World Report* and *Homiletic & Pastoral Review* magazines. Ordering can be done through: www.ignatius.com, or by calling: 1-800-651-1531.



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Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers

Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers is the Founder and Director of Aurem Cordis™, a Christian evangelization and apologetics organization dedicated to the dissemination and promotion of Catholic values, principles, and teaching in complete faithfulness and total submission to Holy Scripture, Sacred Tradition, and the Magisterium. The goal of this apostolate is to bring as many people as possible to a deeper love of Christ and the Gospel by sharing the truth of the Catholic faith in love.

He is active in giving lectures, retreats, and seminars in numerous parishes, on college campuses, and at workshops and conferences nationally and internationally. Deacon Harold has appeared in *Envoy* and *The Catholic Answer* magazines, and on the national radio program “Catholic Answers Live.” He has been featured on the Eternal Word Television Network’s “Life on the Rock,” “EWTN Live” and hosts “Behold the Man,” an EWTN series on male spirituality. Deacon Harold is also featured on Catholic radio in Oregon (88.3 KBVM FM) and serves as a guest host on the Trinity Broadcast Network’s regional television program “Northwest Focus.” His published articles can be read by following the Media link at www.auremcordis.com.

Deacon Burke-Sivers holds a Bachelor’s degree in Economics and Business Administration from the University of Notre Dame, and a Master’s degree in Theological Studies from the University of Dallas. Deacon Harold is a Benedictine Oblate of Mt. Angel Abbey, an associate member of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars, a member of the Confraternity of Catholic Clergy, and a consultation team member for the National Conference of Catholic Bishops National Directory for Catechesis.

Currently serving as the Director of Public Safety at the University of Portland, Deacon Harold is a nationally recognized expert in school safety, security, and violence prevention, and is listed in the International Who’s Who of Professional Management. He and his wife, Colleen, have four children.



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**From Slave To Priest:
The Inspirational Story of Fr. Augustine Tolton**

Product Fact Sheet

Author:	Sr. Caroline Hemesath, SSF
Release Date:	October 2006
Length:	235 pages, illustrated
Price:	\$17.95
ISBN:	1-58617-097-X
Order:	www.ignatius.com 1-800-651-1531

Description:

As the first black Catholic priest of the United States, Fr. Augustine Tolton (1854-1897) was born into slavery and conquered almost insurmountable odds to become a Catholic priest. He was refused at every American Catholic seminary because of this race, and ultimately received his theological training in Rome, where he was ordained.

Though he died an early death at age 43, Fr. Tolton left behind a shining legacy of holy service to God and his people. He was the pastor of St. Monica's Church in Chicago, and established a center which was the focal point for the life of black Catholics in Chicago for 30 years.

The author, Sr. Caroline Hemesath, interviewed many who know Fr. Tolton personally – including St. Katherine Drexel – and puts forth a deeply inspiring portrait of this great American Catholic.

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Broadcast Interview Questions
For

Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers

1. What is it that most should know about Fr. Augustine Tolton? How did you first come to know about him and his story?
2. What do Fr. Tolton's trials as the first Black American priest teach us about authentic male spirituality -- whether in the religious or lay realm?
3. Describe how Fr. Tolton was persecuted at the hands of the very Church he was serving.
4. Is there a modern-day lesson in all this for today's clerics or bishops who fearlessly proclaim truth?
5. What does Fr. Tolton's story say to modern-day Black Catholics?
6. Fr. Tolton was actually denied Catholic seminary training in America, and received it in Rome. How did that happen?
7. You wrote the Foreword to the book, FROM SLAVE TO PRIEST. How has Fr. Tolton's story affected or changed you in any way?
8. Tell us a bit about your new TV series on EWTN, "Behold The Man."



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Ignatius Press Company Fact Sheet

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Blessed Mother Teresa
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