



Reflection from Fr. Mike Roach

As we celebrate Black History Month, we as Catholics are proud that in 2019, Pope Francis issued a decree advancing the cause for sainthood for Augustus Tolton. Father Tolton, who is now Venerable Augustus Tolton, has been recognized for his heroic virtue, persevering through slavery and contending with racism inside and outside of the Church. Despite the enormous challenges, Father Tolton discerned his vocation and ultimately provided for the spiritual and physical needs of many Black Catholics in Illinois.

In Luke's Gospel, we encounter images of society in disarray. Jesus spoke of the social realities of injustice and abuse. He gave his followers multiple challenging commands such as 'love your enemies, be good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you and pray for those who mistreat you'.

Jesus opposed people and systems which created poverty and oppression, and at the same time he responded to the needs of the world with love and mercy. He told his disciples, "be merciful, just as your Father is merciful".

We can imitate how Father Tolton faced discrimination and hate - "to love, bless, give, and forgive." He forgave and prayed for his oppressors. But he did not let racist policies have the last word. Instead, he took on Jesus' challenges as his own; he looked inward and outward and found ways to love and serve that will create a just society.

May that be our call as we continue to live out the kingdom of God, and call upon the holy men and women who have gone before us, like Augustus Tolton, to intercede for us here on earth.

*~ Peace,
Fr. Mike*