

**Juneteenth –
Remarks by Paul Maco at the
Dedication and Blessing of Holy Trinity’s Plaque
Acknowledging the Parish’s History
of Segregation and Racism,
June 19, 2024**

Good evening.

Welcome to Holy Trinity, welcome to all who are descendants of Holy Trinity’s Black parishioners, welcome to members of Epiphany Catholic Church, welcome to members of St. Augustine Catholic Church, welcome to Holy Trinity parishioners, and welcome friends, neighbors, and all who join us this evening for this most solemn gathering.

I am Paul Maco, and I chair Holy Trinity’s History Committee.

Holy Trinity Church was established in 1787. It was the first – and for a time – the only Catholic Church in the growing community of Georgetown and this region. From the beginning, approximately a third of our parishioners were Black. Our sacramental records – and pew rent records – attest to the vibrant role Black Catholics played in the growth of the Holy Trinity community.

Those records, and names on many of the tombstones in Holy Rood Cemetery, today document the lives of the ancestors of many Black families in Georgetown, the District, and beyond.

Yet throughout our time together, our Black Brothers and Sisters in Christ were hardly treated as brothers and sisters.

In 1923, some one hundred thirty-six years after our founding, James A. Smackum, Richard N. Carter, and Aloysius Marshall reported to Archbishop Michael Curley that the segregated space in which Holy Trinity permitted Black parishioners to attend Mass was a meager “30 pews with a seating capacity of 120.”

That space is the balcony you see today in the main church but at that time it was screened off from the area for the choir.

The archbishop requested a census of the African Americans at Holy Trinity. The census enumerated 356 adults and 330 children, who had received seating space for 120.

And so, in 1924, with a rented and refurbished structure at 1409 28th Street and the Josephite father Lawrence E. Schaefer as pastor, our Black parishioners left Holy Trinity to found Epiphany Catholic Church in Georgetown.

Since the formation of our History Committee four years ago, we have not been able to find evidence of any reaction by our remaining White parishioners upon the exodus of our Black parishioners.

Seventy years would pass, until, on April 19, 1994, at a reconciliation service with Epiphany parishioners, Holy Trinity offered a public apology to our Black parishioners and their descendants who, as a result of racial discrimination, left Holy Trinity and founded Epiphany Catholic Church in Georgetown.

We are here this evening because of the hard work and generosity of several people, beginning with Dorothy and Linda Gray, and Neville Waters III, who shared photographs, documents, and family history and memorabilia, all integral to our history group's articles about the Exodus to Epiphany.

We thank them and acknowledge as well Dorothy W. Thomas's sharing of her own girlhood recollections of being a member of Holy Trinity at the 1994 Reconciliation service, reported in the Holy Trinity News and now retold on our history blog, and Kathy Millian and the Holy Trinity group who organized that service and created a steppingstone for our gathering tonight.

Thank you, Father Kevin, for all your support. And thank you, Ashley Klick, our Pastoral Associate for Social Justice, for all you have done to make this evening happen.

To all Holy Trinity's Black parishioners over time and their descendants, we acknowledge our wrongs, and ask your forgiveness.

"O God, forgive us for these sins of racism and the pain they have caused. Guide us from repentance to reconciliation."