

Archival Notes on the Early Days of Some Ethnic Liturgies & Para Liturgical Services

originally written in 2013 -

Schedules for liturgical services geared to Catholics of African descent in the Boston archdiocese and Worcester diocese are listed separately.

Author of notes has been active in the Boston archdiocese since Advent 1973 as a youth group secretary in the Haitian immigrant ministry when it was located in North Cambridge based Our Lady of Pity. Notre Dame de Pitié, a Canadian-American parish closed in 2003. The Haitians have been worshipping at St. John's in North Cambridge since 2004.

I am not currently a member of any church committee. However, I attend Sunday liturgies in various parishes in the Boston diocese and rarely go to Haitian charismatic prayer services. However, I continue to write, take notes as I did in my teenage years as secretary at *Notre Dame de Pitié* youth group called *Jeunesse en Marche* and an ad Hoc parish council, *Comité Paroissial* throughout my professional adult life . My Jesuit theological training is also a catalyst to keep notes of occurrences in ministries, in this case those geared to brethren of African descent, be it Blacks of immigrant descent or native born African Americans descendant of slaves (ADOS).

Though a list of Black Apostolate ministries was unavailable on their website on February 25, 2022 or on November 23, 2023, the Boston archdiocese may be contacted for more info on ministries for Catholics of African descent. Their website is: <https://bostoncatholic.org/>

There is a Ugandan mass at St. Mary's in Waltham. In 2013, the Mwindu Congolese were at St. Mary's Lynn. I was one of the co-founder in 2003, 2004 when a Jesuit priest organized the first liturgy in a Cambridge Jesuits house. Before moving to Lynn around 2005 or 2006, the Congolese were in St. Columbkille in Brighton, the first parish that welcomed them. Father Vincent Machozi Karunzu who was martyred in his native Congo on March 21, 2016 was their spiritual chaplain. In one of their meetings at St. Columbkille, the pastor who is familiar with the Cuban culture talked about a Pan African mass or ministry. However the Congolese didn't show interest. For one reason or another, by the time the Congolese started worshipping in Lynn, I wasn't invited to the meetings that brought them to Lynn. I was no longer in the founding member board. There was no interest to share ministries. Though Haitians share the same St. Mary's parish at that time, both groups speak French. Some Congolese had Haitian teachers when Haitians went to teach in Congo after their independence Kenyans were in Winthrop, Massachusetts prior to moving to Immaculate Conception in Malden around 2018 or 2019. Nigerian Catholic community had been in Ste Katherine Drexel, Roxbury, formerly and St. John-St. Hugh since 1988. Here are some excerpts from their website:" Formed in 1988 by Father Alfonsus Gusiora, the community was invited by Father Gerald Osterman to locate the Community at St. John-St. Hugh Parish, which is now St. Katharine Drexel Parish."

View the 2013 note below about the beginnings of a Massachusetts Cameroonian ministry.

Updated Haitian Sunday Liturgies as of November 2023 are in a separate link. Some of the followings are for historical and archival purposes.

Saint Charles Borromeo Parish Community in Waltham CLOSED (Church property was listed for sale on November 2021)

Info related to the Haitian community was:

30 Taylor Street
Waltham, MA 02453

Haitian Mass Sundays, 1:00 P.M

Charismatic prayer Wednesdays @ 6:30PM

E-mail: stcharleswaltham@yahoo.com

Web address: www.stcharleswaltham.weconnect.com

This memo about **La Sainte Famille** (Holy Family) was in their website: “We meet on Saturdays from 6 to 8 PM in the Parish Center. All are welcome to participate in prayer, bible reading and to reflect on our life as a Christian. For more information, call Sara at 978.987.8063”. (I did call, but have not heard from her yet, be it in 2013 or in 2022. On November 2023, the number was not in service

In addition to the charismatic gatherings and prayer services that had been run primarily by the laity, especially women, the Haitian laity had been involved in starting ministries with weekly Sunday masses. In Hyde Park, at Most Precious Blood Church, a lay man started running a Haitian Creole 5:00 PM Sunday mass ministry in the early to mid-2000s. A lay woman ran a ministry in Immaculate Conception, Everett, MA from 2003-2018.

Haitian Charismatic Prayer gatherings is worth noting since the charismatic movement draws significant crowds for their weekly and yearly services. About 3,000 including those who usually attend weekly English masses attend the yearly charismatic gatherings. The first national charismatic gathering I attended was in Lowell, Massachusetts in the late 1990s, early 2000s. On August in 2013 or 2014, I went to Rhode Island for couple hours while on my way to visit the mansions in Newport. The last Charismatic gathering I participated was in Worcester in 2018. The Haitian Charismatic co-founder with a high presence in the Haitian Charismatic movement in Haiti and in the Haitian diaspora, Sister Claire Gagné from the Charity of Saint Louis passed away on January 8, 2022, at the age of 89, about 5 weeks shy from her 90th birthday.

Jericho a more recent movement that started in Miami circa 2002, 2003 by Father Reginald Jean Mary is another Pentecostal type revival prayer service that brings thousands of faithful to the Haitian churches. According to a Miami Herald October 15, 2015, the seven day services draw 10,000 attendees for the week at Notre Dame d’Haiti parish in Miami. A more recent Miami diocesan paper *Florida Catholic* reveals the October 15 to 21, 2023 services went on from 6:30 to 11:30 every evening. It also noted “Although most of the thousands of attendees came from South Florida, several came from other states and others watched worldwide on Haitian media.” YouTube on the closing date had 32,000 viewers. Thousands also watched on What’s App and Facebook. The writer knows people from Haiti, Boston, and New York who came to Jericho in Miami.

Though the Jericho revival drew thousands, as an educator with a Jesuit theological formation, I believe spending 35 hours worshipping in a week is not efficient use of active prayer, prayer in action time and mission of the Church. I would divide the 35 hours into a 10 hour worship, 20 hours of faith formation, teaching and learning including reading and discussing the 2021-23 synodal report. There could be five (5) hours where groups would visit prisons, nursing homes, seniors living alone, go do something for the sick, the migrants in hotels/motels/shelters, or other service project work. These ideas apply in 12 hour day prayer services, called “nine to nine”, and 20 to 30 hour a week Jericho services in other parishes.

Regarding Charismatic prayer services, in Boston, St. Mary’s in Lynn, St. Ann in Somerville, St. Johns in Cambridge, St. Angela in Mattapan, St. Matthews in Dorchester had held weekly charismatic prayers since the 1990s. St. Matthews had held 2 charismatic prayers a week (Fridays @ 7:00 P.M & Sundays @ 6:00 P.M).They have had Jericho in the 2000s

St. Matthews closed on October 2020 and St. Mary’s in Lynn is not holding Haitian services anymore.

Charismatic Prayers that had not met since COVID Spring 2020

Church of the Sacred Heart

169 Cummins Hwy. Roslindale, MA 02131

(617) 325-3322

<http://www.sh-roslindale.org/>

Haitian [Charismatic] Prayer Group (Have not met since COVID in 2020 and have not been able to reach the organizer(s))

Schedule prior to COVID

Fridays 7:00 pm Lower Church

Have read about a Haitian leaders’ meeting in Roslindale’s Sacred Heart bulletin. However, the charismatic leader told me there are no Haitian Sunday masses. I have e-mailed and called her after reading the 2013 post and have not heard from her. I did a presentation on Women in the Church for them in 2014, but have not been in touch with this group. Was told in 2021 by a parish staff this charismatic group had not met since the onset of COVID-19 in 2020. I inquired and have not heard back as I am revising this note on November 23, 2023.

St. Bernadette Parish

1026 No. Main St. Randolph, MA 02368

Phone: (781) 963-1327 Fax: (781) 963-0198

Haitian [Charismatic] Prayer Groups (Had not met since COVID in 2020 – parish secretary is reaching out the organizer(s) as the writer is updating this “note”).

Schedule prior to COVID in 2020:

Wednesdays 7:00-9:00PM

Saturdays 5:00 -9:00 PM

Home Based Conference Call Prayer Meetings & Need for Internal Communication

As alluded to above, Haitians had held charismatic prayer groups in several parishes since the early 1990s. I recall one of the first ones circa 1992 @ Our Lady of Pity in Cambridge, Massachusetts. On another note, a phenomenon of prayer meetings and para liturgical services like Station of the Cross are occurring via telephonic conference calls. That had started perhaps in the 2000s. They are run by member(s) or leaders of charismatic groups, church committee members or individuals in the churches. For instance for many years, an accomplished Haitian singer had a house (one of her duplexes) dedicated exclusively to a prayer group. They had prayer services every last Friday in that home. Priest(s) had come to preside there. When I visited that house of prayer in Florida, I said to myself like the first Christians, she has a "house church." Since COVID members of the group pray via telephonic conference calls three times a week.

Despite of all these prayer meetings in person or via conference calls and weekly para liturgical gatherings like Charismatic prayers, communication is lacking between lay and ordained ministers, and among church members in general. The ministry leaders seem to run their ministries as a series of social clubs for friends to meet un choir members, committee members and the like. Established, professional immigrants as well as second generation Haitian Americans are not active in the Haitian ministries either. There is also limited or no communication between priests, laity members who arrived to this country in the recent years and professionals who have been in the United States for 40 to 50 years or more. African Americans, Catholics from African countries, Caribbeans, and other Black Catholics are not interacting either. As a result faith formation training and outreach to the youth, to the sons and daughters of Black Catholic immigrants, and those of the previous generations of African American Catholics are almost absent in the Church. This lack of communication among ecclesial gatekeepers is adversely impacting outreach, educational, academic, research, theological reflections and documentations, as well social and assistance that is so needed in Black communities.

For more on the lack of communication, please see an editorial Brother Tob from the Brooklyn based National Haitian Apostolate sent via email on October 2019. It's entitled "**What is the future of the Haitian Pastoral of the United States?**" Here are some excerpts:

"It is important to mention that there is a big difference between the celebration of Parish Masses in Creole and a consultation at the diocesan and national levels to better discern the fundamental challenges of this immigrant population. The Church needs to formulate the basic qualities that are required of the leaders of this population, who are often in distress. It is very difficult to speak of a Haitian pastoral Ministry if the priests, deacons, nuns and committed lay members of the Haitian community do not meet in their dioceses or archdioceses to discuss the challenges, priorities and issues of the Haitian pastoral in their diocese or archdiocese.

In this weekly newsletter of the National Center of The Haitian Apostolate we believe that the presence of Haitian priests in a diocese or Archdiocese and the celebration of creole masses are not enough for us to speak of the existence of a Haitian ministry. Is there consultation, exchanges, meetings and constant calls between priests, nuns, deacons and committed laity who want to contribute to our pastoral care? As a nation of priests, prophets and kings we are obliged to ask questions and tell the truth.

What is the future of Haitian ministry in the United States? In 20 years and 40 years in a society where many young people tend to turn their backs on Christianity. What contribution did Haitian deacons and priests make to Haitian ministry? Is Youth Ministry a priority for our spiritual leaders? Of course young people represent the future of our society. Sometimes our youth cannot participate in a youth gathering day for transportation problems quite solvable by generous leaders.”

Notes written in 2013 about a Cameroonian Ministry that started the same year

A Cameroonian group celebrated a liturgy in Malden, Massachusetts on December 2012. They are looking for another place. Was told they found a church in Salem and the current pastor will preside for them on Sunday, April 28 2013.

The story about the Cameroonian is a long and complexed one. I attended the Weston Jesuit School of Theology between 2001 and 2005 and get to know a number of Jesuits including those from Africa. I still attend workshops, seminars, and conferences at Boston College where my **Alma matter** merged in 2008. Priests there preside in my local parish every Sunday. Moreover, having been an ELL teacher for over 25 years, active in the Boston area for close to 40 years, traveled 27 countries, and speak about 5 languages, I got to interact and know a lot of people from diverse backgrounds. My vision for ministry is more towards a cross cultural, multilingual lens like St. Camillus in Silver Spring whose choir I saw while attending a conference in D.C in 2008.

I introduced a Cameroonian musician friend of mine to a Congolese priest who has been presiding in my local parish. We have spoken maybe for a year about gradually building a multicultural ministry, starting with a multicultural choir. During practice for the first mass by the choir on October 2012, I brought in a diverse group, Caucasians, Africans, Haitians, everybody. The choir sang during three 5:30 liturgies until the 2nd or 3rd Sunday of November 2012. Then things fell apart. I believe due to the Congolese priest's lack of interest in organizing and training for the choir members was a factor and perhaps both men were not comfortable with me as lay woman with theological formation. Apparently though we planned everything together, the Congolese priest and a Cameroonian musician friend I brought did not want me and my then Swedish-American roommate whom I brought in to play the piano to have a leadership role in the choir or be seen as knowledgeable professionals.

The Cameroonian musician I brought in and the Jesuit priest student from Congo apparently were planning another mass for the Cameroonians while we were practicing for the choir. Though we have spoken many times about the idea of a Multicultural, Multilingual Pan African liturgy, and both speak French and other African languages, they went around without inviting me and held a liturgy just for English speaking Cameroonians on December 2013 in a town that has close to 10,000 people of African descent, most of them Haitians, Africans and other immigrants. There are not too many African-Americans in this diverse mid-size urban of close to 60,000 (48% of them of color). There is a weekly Vietnamese and Hispanic liturgy in that parish. A monthly Philippino liturgy also occurs in a different church in the same town. Wishing best of luck to the Cameroonians who started the weekend of Sunday April 28, 2013 in Salem. Hopefully they will evolve within the larger paradigm of addressing the spiritual needs of

Catholics of African descent in sub/urban, Gateway, exurb communities which had been my social/spiritual location for 50 years in 2023, as this “note” is being edited/updated.

Based on an email exchange, the Cameroonian community meets every 2nd and 4th Sundays at St. Anne in Salem, MA. As of November 2023, the Vietnamese community wasn't meeting any longer in Sacred Hearts, a North of Boston parish. Given the high presence of Black Catholics in the region (about 20,000 three generations of Haitians who come from a Catholic country, adding those from African countries, and African Americans, I wonder if a Multicultural ministry that could serve the Black Catholics in the region could take the time that the Vietnamese were meeting (3:00 to 5:00PM). A 5:30 mass that existed for at least the past 25 years doesn't occur anymore. Outside of Mattapan/Roxbury, there isn't an English liturgy that brings together all people of African descent. The Kenyans, the Ugandans, and Camerooneses who speak English meet separately, and have not demonstrated interest to collaborate or share ministries with other groups.

A number of ministries geared to faithful from African countries had evolved in the Worcester diocese circa 2015, 2018. Please see *African American & Partial list of other Ethnic Liturgies in Massachusetts, for schedules and lists of liturgies from East and West African countries in Worcester and Lowell.*

Prepared by Nekita Lamour, M.Ed. MTS, IBCS degree candidate @ Xavier University, New Orleans - Originally written on April 2013, revised February 2022, updated November 23, 2023