



THE CHURCH OF ST. FRANCIS XAVIER

ART PROJECT – PHASE 2 MODERN DAY HOLY PEOPLE AND SAINTS OF THE AMERICAS

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In 2020, in the wake of George Floyd's murder, the Church of St. Francis Xavier joined faith communities across the country in reflecting on myriad aspects of racial justice that the Gospel calls us to address. The reflection continued the parish's modern-day commitment to racial justice and inclusion which dates to at least 1960 when the parish had an annual civil rights Mass in the name of St. Martin de Porres.

In 1962, the Mass premiered jazz pianist Mary Lou Williams' hymn, "*Black Christ of the Andes*," which honored de Porres. Walter M. Abbott, SJ that day quoted from the Vatican Council's opening statement, "*We proclaim that all men are brothers, irrespective of the race or nation to which they belong.*" Two years later, at another Mass for civil rights, Anthony Woods, SJ preached that civil rights is "*not just a problem of law. It is a problem that goes deep into the dignity of man, which was put there by God... If we do not love someone because his skin is a different color, then we do not love Christ.*"

As part of our 2020 reflection, the working group proposed an expansion of our church iconography to include people of heroic virtue from around the world and closer to home in the Americas and New York. Following a broad consultation with the community, the first phase of the project was dedicated in June 2022. The Communion of Saints and Holy People consists of twelve panels of international and American saints and holy people installed in between the Stations of the Cross and beneath our stained glass windows. The individuals selected reflect the diversity of our parish in the twenty-first century by race, gender and ethnicity. They are the people to whom current parishioners pray, seek intercession, and take as their role models.

The second phase of the project is underway—the design and fabrication of two tapestries for the narthex, one on each side of the steps leading into the church. "*I Will Go In To the Altar of God..To God who gives joy to my youth,*" is one of several titles contemplated for the work based upon Psalm 43:4. The highly regarded artist, John Nava, who created the tapestries for the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles, accepted a commission to create the tapestries.

The iconography, which continues the theme of the communion of saints and holy people, focuses on people of heroic virtue who are from the Americas. These are people whose lives were dedicated to Gospel values and the struggle to pursue justice in its many forms. They reflect the diversity of our world and the commonality all seekers of justice share. Some died a martyr's death to bring about a more just world. The individuals selected to be depicted in the tapestries are listed in the left margin with their brief bios on the following pages. If viewing the pdf, click on the hyperlinked names on the left for more information. Periodic updates will be made as the project progresses through the various fabrication and installation phases.

PASTOR'S LETTER

For the second phase of our project to diversify the iconography of our church, we have engaged internationally renowned artist, John Nava, to create two tapestries to adorn the narthex of the church. Inspired by Nava's work at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles, the work features individuals who worked for or gave their lives for human rights and equality.

The quote from Psalm 43:4 "I will go to the altar of God, to God who gives joy to my youth," invites people of all backgrounds to enter into God's presence and bless God's name.

Fr. Ken Boller, SJ
Pastor
Church of St. Francis Xavier

ABOUT THE ARTIST - JOHN NAVA

John Nava studied art at the College of Creative Studies at UC Santa Barbara and did graduate work at the Villa Schifanoia Graduate School of Fine Art in Florence, Italy. His work is found in numerous private, corporate and public collections throughout the United States, Europe and Japan.

In 2003 Nava's tapestries for the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels won the National Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art and Architecture (IFRAA) Design Honor Award for Visual Art.

In 2017 *Sacred Material*, a book that covers the work done for the Los Angeles cathedral tapestry project, was published by Angel City Press.

Additional projects include large-scale murals, paintings and tapestries for the Tokyo Grain Exchange in Tokyo, Japan, Benaroya Hall in Seattle, the Ronald Tutor Campus Center at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, the Firestone Library at Princeton University, and the School of Music at Yale University. Further large-scale tapestry cycles include projects for Holy Spirit Catholic Church, Las Vegas, Nevada and the University of San Diego, San Diego California.

In 2021 five new large-scale tapestries were unveiled depicting Our Lady of the Angels for the Sanctuary wall of the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, Los Angeles, California.



Harry Belafonte | 1927-2023

Harry Belafonte, was a renowned musician, actor and activist. His activism was a focus throughout his life. He is credited as a major financier of the Civil Rights Movement, personally raising more than \$50,000 to bail Martin Luther King, Jr.

out of the Birmingham City jail. Belafonte also financially supported the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the 1961 Freedom Rides to New Orleans, and the 1963 March on Washington. Belafonte was active in the anti-Apartheid Movement in South Africa.

Belafonte was reared a Catholic by his devout mother, attending St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church and St. Charles Borromeo School in Harlem. He would credit his mother as a primary inspiration for his activism, with her words during his youth: “Don’t ever let injustice go by unchallenged.”



Daniel Berrigan SJ | 1921-2016

Peace activist and writer Daniel Berrigan, SJ, was born in Virginia, Minnesota, in 1921. Directly out of high school in 1939, he became a member of the Society of Jesus and was ordained in 1952.

Daniel was deeply influenced by his younger brother Philip who served in the army during World War II and became a Josephite priest. Daniel marched with Philip in the civil rights movement at Selma in 1965. They became more active in the antiwar movements against U.S. involvement in Vietnam in the late 1960s. Their most famous protest was in 1968. With seven other participants, Daniel and Philip burned 378 files of young men who were to be drafted for military service. This led to the Berrigans’ arrest with the other members of their group. Daniel served two years in prison and was released in 1972. Berrigan wrote of the incident and the trial in his play *The Trial of the Catonsville Nine*.



Grace Lee Boggs | 1915-2015

Grace Lee Boggs was a Chinese American author, social activist, philosopher and feminist. She is regarded as a key figure in the Asian American, Black Power and Civil Rights movements.

Despite her Ph.d in Philosophy from Bryn Mawr, she found significant barriers in the academic world in the 1940’s and took a low paying job at the University of Chicago. At this point she took the trajectory that would follow her for the rest of her life—a focus on the struggles of the African American community. She founded DETROIT SUMMER a multicultural, intergenerational youth program in 1992 and was the recipient of many awards.



John Bucki, SJ | 1950-2016

Fr. John Bucki, SJ, was a native of Buffalo, NY, born on January 12, 1950. He graduated from Fordham University and the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, CA; in 1979 he was ordained a priest in the Society of Jesus.

John’s early ministries with the Jesuits were in the field of education, teaching math at Regis and Xavier High Schools in NYC and at McQuaid in Rochester, and from 1980 he also worked in Nigeria and the Phillipines. When he came to the Church of St. Francis Xavier in 1988 he carried on and substantially expanded the work of the parish Welcome Table and food pantry, and these ministries, now in the form of the Xavier Mission, continue to serve thousands of needy persons to this day. John was also chair of the New York Interfaith Voices Against Hunger. In 2001, John spent his sabbatical year at the Center of Concern in Washington, D.C., with whom he continued a collaboration afterwards, contributing widely disseminated lectionary reflections on social justice. John strongly believed that the pursuit of social justice began with individual action, however large or small, to provide practical help for those in need, whether refugee, homeless, hungry or disenfranchised. During his later time in college campus ministry, sharing his distinctively joyful theology at Canisius and LeMoyne, he led many students in boisterous groups to encounter their local and global communities through service trips regionally, to the Xavier Mission in Manhattan and the Mercy Center in the Bronx along with other places around NYC, as well as overseas to Jamaica, Ecuador and Poland.

Berta Cáceres | 1971-2016

Berta Cáceres, a Lenca woman, grew up during the violence that swept through Central America in the 1980s. She became a student activist and in 1993, she co-founded the National Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) to address the growing threats posed to Lenca communities by illegal logging, fight for their territorial rights and improve their livelihoods.



Cáceres rallied the indigenous Lenca people of Honduras and waged a grassroots campaign that successfully pressured the world’s largest dam builder to pull out of the Agua Zarca Dam. The dam, slated for construction on the sacred Gualcarque River, was pushed through without consulting the indigenous Lenca people—Cáceres filed complaints with government authorities and brought along community representatives on trips to Tegucigalpa. She organized a local assembly where community members formally voted against the dam, and led a protest where people peacefully demanded their rightful say in the project. Death threats to Cáceres continued until March 3, 2016, when she was killed by gunmen in her home in La Esperanza, Honduras.

MODERN DAY HOLY PEOPLE AND SAINTS OF THE AMERICAS



St Frances Xavier Cabrini (Mother Cabrini) | 1850-1917

In 1889, New York seemed to be filled with chaos and poverty, and into this new world stepped Mother Frances Cabrini and her Sister companions. Cabrini organized catechism and education classes for the immigrants and provided for the needs of the many orphans.

She established schools and orphanages despite tremendous odds.

Soon, requests for her to open schools came to Frances Cabrini from all over the world. She traveled to Europe, Central and South America, and throughout the United States. She made 24 trans-Atlantic crossings and established 67 institutions: schools, hospitals, and orphanages in New York, Chicago, Des Plaines, IL, Seattle, New Orleans, Denver, Golden, CO, Los Angeles and Philadelphia.

In 1950, Pope Pius XII named Frances Xavier Cabrini as the patron saint of immigrants, recognizing her efforts on their behalf across the Americas in schools, orphanages, hospitals, and prisons.



James Chaney 1943-1964

Andrew Goodman 1943-1964

Michael Schwerner 1939-1964

Victims of abduction, torture and murder during the 1964 Freedom Summer, June 21, 1964, Philadelphia, Mississippi

Andrew Goodman was born and raised in NYC's Upper West Side; Michael Schwerner in Pelham NY. Both were Jewish. James Chaney was born and raised in Meridian MS. He attended Catholic schools and was a member of the St. Joseph Catholic Church. John Lewis recruited the three to work for the Congress of Racial Equality during the Freedom Summer to conduct classes and register African American voters in rural Mississippi. While investigating the burning of a church where classes had been held, they were falsely arrested and released. En route to Meridian, they were stopped and taken to a remote area where they were shot to death. Chaney was first tortured. Goodman was likely buried alive. Their bodies were found 44 days later in an earthen dam.

Modern day Martyrs, these men represent people who give their lives for justice. The inclusion of two of our Jewish brothers is fitting as we share with Jews a quest for justice.



Cesar Chavez | 1927-1993

Cesar Chavez brought to national attention the plight of the farm workers in California and throughout the United States. He was probably the first Latino-American to come to national prominence who fought for better working condition and salaries for the Latinos working on the farms in California.

His United Farm Workers Union gave a voice to these workers. The battle for worker's rights wasn't always easy but Chavez persevered to ensure a safe working environment and a living wage for them.



Churchwomen of El Salvador:

Maura Clarke | 1931-1980

Jean Donovan | 1953-1980

Ita Ford | 1940-1980

Dorothy Kazel | 1939-1980

Sr. Dorothy Kazel, O.S.U., Sr. Ita Ford, M.M., Sr. Maura Clarke, M.M., and Jean Donovan were brutally raped and murdered in El Salvador while traveling back from the San Salvador airport. They were killed because they were committed to being in solidarity with their brothers and sisters—in essence, for being Christians. The deaths of these four churchwomen only hinted at the violence and atrocities that would await El Salvador. From the 1980 to 1992, the brutal Civil War in El Salvador took the lives of over 70,000 innocent people. Many died at the hands of Salvadoran soldiers, many of whom received training at the U.S. Army School of the Americas (now known as the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation). The U.S. was integrally involved in El Salvador's civil war, supporting the government with approximately \$1 million of military aid per day throughout the conflict.

The world lost four saints on December 2, 1980, but these Holy Women remain with us today. They continue to teach us to be people of peace, people of hope, people of justice—people grounded in Christ.

MODERN DAY HOLY PEOPLE AND SAINTS OF THE AMERICAS



Henry, Gertrude and Leonard Crow Dog | 1899-2021

Sicangu Lakota Chief Leonard Crow Dog was a Wicasa Wakan, Holy Man, a leader in the Native American Church. He dedicated his life to preserving the spiritual teachings of the Lakota. He is credited

with reviving sun dance and other ceremonies integral to Native American life. He was a prominent figure in the 1973 Wounded Knee Occupation and the American Indian Movement, which led to policies that emphasized respect for cultural traditions instead of assimilation. Henry and Gertrude Crow Dog, his parents, also were Lakota spiritual leaders. Gertrude, a life-long practicing Catholic, was revered as a holy woman by the Lakota leaders who frequently sought her wisdom. JoAnn Crow Dog, Leonard's widow, has given permission for Leonard and his parents to be included in the tapestry.



Addie Mae Collins 1949-1963

Carol Denise McNair 1951-1963

Carole Robertson 1949-1963

Cynthia Wesley 1949-1963

Victims of the 16th Street Baptist Church Bombing, Sunday, September 15, 1963, Birmingham, Alabama

On September 15, 1963, at about 10:22 a.m. 15 sticks of dynamite detonated beneath the church steps proximate to basement space where these 14 year olds were tying each other's sashes and donning their choir robes. Four members of the Klu Klux Klan had purchased and placed the dynamite earlier that morning. It blew a crater 5' wide and 2' deep near where the girls were.

Modern day Holy Innocents, the children represent the murder of innocent children through modern times.

Dorothy Day | 1897-1980

Dorothy's life was as messy as anyone's life. Unlike everyone, she dedicated her life to racial social justice in the biblical sense. The Catholic Worker, which she co-founded with Peter Maurin in 1933, is testament to the power of being open to the Holy Spirit. Dorothy Day is a heroic American Catholic, New York Catholic and Xavier Catholic.



Ernestine Eckstein | 1941-1992

Ernestine Eckstein (1941-1992) was a black lesbian activist in the pre-Stonewall era. She was the only person of color to participate in the annual July 4th picket lines for gay and lesbian equality in front of Independence Hall in Philadelphia.



As a leader of the New York chapter of the Daughters of Bilitis, she risked her livelihood by publicly claiming her sexual identity in an era when there could be devastating consequences for coming out. Also active in the black feminist movement, she sought to bring various civil rights movements together, *"meeting on the common ground of an unjust position in society."*

Fannie Lou Hamer | 1917-1977

Fannie Lou Hamer—American voting and women's rights activist and leader in civil rights movement. She repeatedly fought to register to vote as a Black woman and in 1964 she co-founded the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party which challenged the local Democratic Party's efforts to block Black participation. Over the years, Hamer was known for referencing spiritual hymns and scripture in advocating for black women in Mississippi.



In 1963, Hamer and 6 other women were arrested following a sit-in at a "Whites Only" restaurant. She was taken to jail and beaten; she never fully recovered from the attack. Hamer lost vision in one of her eyes and suffered permanent kidney damage which contributed to her death in 1977 at age 59.

Rabbi Abraham Heschel 1907-1972

Abraham Joshua Heschel was a Polish-American rabbi known for his interest in spirituality and the Hebrew prophets, who he believed called for social action that would lead to racial equality and peace. He was the Jewish representative to the Second Vatican Council, where he successfully persuaded council leaders to eliminate and modify liturgical passages that demeaned Jews or referred to the conversion of Jews to Catholicism. A prolific writer, he was known as the "prophet's prophet".





Judy Heumann | 1947-2023

Judith (Judy) Heumann was a lifelong advocate for the rights of disabled people. She contracted polio in 1949 in Brooklyn, New York and began to use a wheelchair for her mobility. She was denied the right to attend school because she was considered a “fire hazard” at the

age of five. Her parents played a strong role in fighting for her rights as a child, but Judy soon determined that she, working in collaboration with other disabled people, had to play an advocacy role due to continuous discrimination.

Throughout her life, Judy traveled in her motorized wheelchair to countries on every continent, in urban and rural communities alike. She played a role in the development and implementation of major legislation including the IDEA, Section 504, the Americans with Disability Act and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.



Dolores Huerta | 1930- Present

Born in 1930 in New Mexico, Dolores Huerta began her career as an activist in 1955 when she co-founded the Stockton, CA chapter of the Community Service Organization, which strove to increase voter registration and economic improvement for Hispanics. In 1962, Huerta co-founded the

National Farm Workers Association with Cesar Chavez, which later became the United Farm Workers Union. She successfully led the negotiations in the 1965 Delano strike to gain safer working conditions for 5,000 grape workers. Her work eventually led to the California Agricultural Labor Relations Act of 1975 which allowed farm workers to form unions and bargain for better wages and conditions. Her later work involved getting Latinos and Women elected to political office.

Huerta received the Eleanor Roosevelt Human Rights Award (1998) and the Presidential Medal of Honor (2015). She is known for the cry, “*Si, se puede.*” (Yes, it can be done.) the United Farm Workers of America motto.



Fr. Mychal Judge, OFM | 1933-2001

Fr. Mychal Judge was an American Franciscan Friar who served as chaplain to FDNY. While serving in that capacity, he was killed becoming the first certified fatality of 9/11. He was also known in NYC for ministering to the homeless, hungry, recovering alcoholics, people with AIDS, the

sick, injured and grieving, immigrants and gays and lesbians and those abandoned by society. Even before his death many consider Judge to be a saint for his extraordinary works of charity.



Martin Luther King, Jr. | 1929-1968

Martin Luther King, Jr. was born on January 15, 1929. He was a Baptist minister and activist, who was one of the most prominent leaders of the Civil Rights Movement from 1955 until his assassination in 1968.

Inspired by Christian beliefs and Mahatma Gandhi, he led targeted nonviolent resistance against Jim Crow laws and other forms of discrimination. He was one of the leaders of the 1963 March on Washington where he delivered his “*I Have A Dream*” speech, which still serves as a touchstone and rallying cry for peace and justice movements today.

King was the first President of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. This organization, along with many others, were instrumental in achieving pivotal legislative gains including the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Fair Housing Act of 1968. King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in October, 1964 for combating racial inequality through nonviolent resistance. In his final years, King expanded his focus to include opposition to poverty, capitalism and the Vietnam War.



Kiyoshi Kuromiya | 1943-2000

Kiyoshi Kuromiya was born in a Japanese American internment camp during World War II and grew up to be a committed civil rights activist. He was a personal assistant to Martin Luther King, Jr. and was one of the founders of the Gay Liberation Front/Philadelphia. He was involved with

ACT-UP/Philadelphia and We the People Living with AIDS. He fought for research that involved the community in its design, particularly people of color, drug users and women. He succumbed to HIV/AIDS the day after his 57th birthday.

John Lewis | 1940-2020



Baptist minister, American politician and recognized leader in civil rights movement, John Lewis was one of the principal organizers of the March on Washington in 1963. In 1965, he led the first of three Selma to Montgomery marches across the Edmund Pettis Bridge where in an incident known as Bloody Sunday he was attacked

by State Troopers and police. During 17 terms as a member of the United States House of Representatives, Lewis is remembered for frequently saying, “*Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble.*”



Audre Lorde | 1934-1992

A self-described “*black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet,*” Audre Lorde (1934-1992) dedicated both her life and her creative talent to confronting and addressing injustices of racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia. A native New Yorker, born of West Indian immigrant parents, Audre

was educated in the city, and continued to write and teach throughout her career, even serving as the Poet Laureate for New York State.

She was central to many liberation movements and activist circles, including second-wave feminism, civil rights and Black cultural movements, and struggles for LGBTQ equality. In particular, Lorde’s poetry is known for the power of its call for social and racial justice, as well as its depictions of queer experience and sexuality.



Thurgood Marshall | 1908-1993

Upon graduating first in his class from Howard University Law School, Thurgood Marshall began the private practice of law in Baltimore. Among his first legal victories was *Murray v Parson* (1935), a suit accusing the University of Maryland

of violating the Fourteenth Amendment’s guarantee of equal protection of the laws by denying an African American applicant admission to its law school solely on the basis of race.

In October 1961, Marshall was appointed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit by President John F. Kennedy. President Lyndon B. Johnson named Marshall United States Solicitor General in July 1965 and nominated him to the United States Supreme Court on June 13, 1967. He served on the Supreme Court until October 1, 1991

Angeles Ruiz McNeely | 1925-2004



Angeles Ruiz McNeely was a holy, beloved and trusted member of the parish. Her care for the sacred spaces of our parish transcended the church itself and came to encompass the entire neighborhood and community.

Angeles was an original volunteer in the early days of the Welcome Table, where she initiated the bread ministry by going around to the local bakeries collecting their leftover bread each day. She could be found working behind the scenes at every parish community event and literally with great kindness feeding the poor all in concert with her intense devotion to the rosary and Eucharist. The simplicity of her spirituality and her devotion to the parish mission are to be cherished and emulated



Thomas Merton | 1915-1968

Thomas Merton was an American Trappist Monk, writer, theologian, mystic, poet, social activist and scholar of comparative religions. He was a keen proponent of interfaith understanding. He was also known for his non-violent stand during race riots and the Vietnam War.

A prolific writer, he is widely recognized as an important 20th Century Catholic mystic and thinker. He wrote more than 50 books on spirituality, social justice and quiet pacifism.



Sister M. Patrice Murphy 1933-2019

Sr. Patrice Murphy was a Sister of Charity of New York and director of St. Vincent’s Hospital’s Hospice Care Program, devoting her time to bereavement counseling, helping husbands and wives whose spouses had died, learn to live again.

In the early 1980’s Sr. Patrice would use her experience with grieving partners to help a new community in need, gay men whose partners had died from AIDS, offering eight-week bereavement group sessions with the Gay Men’s Health Crisis Center. “*We’re here to take care of people who are ill and their (survivors). Sexual preference is not an issue.*”



Rosa Parks | 1913-2005

Born Rosa Louise McCauley Parks on February 4, 1913 in Tuskegee, Alabama, Parks was an American activist. The Civil Rights Movement had its birth on December 1, 1955, when an unknown seamstress in Montgomery Alabama refused to give up her seat to a white

passenger. The brave woman, Rosa Parks, was arrested and fined for violating a city ordinance. Her lonely act of defiance began a movement that ended legal segregation in America, and made her an inspiration to freedom-loving people everywhere.

Parks’ bus incident led to the formation of the Montgomery Improvement Association, led by the young pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The association called for a boycott of the city-owned bus company. The boycott lasted 381 days and brought Mrs. Parks, Dr. King and their cause to the attention of the world. A Supreme Court decision struck down the Montgomery ordinance under which Mrs. Parks had been fined, and outlawed racial segregation on public transportation.

MODERN DAY HOLY PEOPLE AND SAINTS OF THE AMERICAS



Elba Ramos and Celina Ramos 1947-1989 1973-1989

Julia Elba Ramos was born in Santiago de Maria, El Salvador. She and her husband, Obdulio, worked

on coffee farms during the harvest season to support their four children. Two children died at a young age. In 1985, Elba was hired by the Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas as a domestic worker. Obdulio was hired in 1989 as a watchman and gardener. Their house on the perimeter of the university grounds was near a street that had been bombed. For safety, Elba and Celina, their third child, moved into a vacant room in the Jesuits' residence. The Salvadoran elite military unit that assassinated six Jesuits on November 16, 1989 murdered mother and daughter to eliminate witnesses and to induce fear in the hearts of other innocent Salvadorans.

Elba and Celina Ramos represent the thousands of victims of political violence triggered by demands for social justice in the Americas during the 1970s – 1990s. .



Sr. Dorothy Stang, SND (Angel of the Amazon) 1931-2005

Dorothy Stang decided early on that she would give her life to God as a Sister of Notre Dame de Namur. Her deepest desire was to serve the poor as a missionary. She and four other Sisters went to Brazil in 1966 where she worked to help poor farmers build independent futures for their

families until her murder in 2005.

Over the years, Sr. Dorothy's ministry brought her into conflict with wealthy and powerful ranchers, loggers and land speculators who sought to profit from deforestation and the eviction of poor workers. On Feb. 12, 2005, less than a week after meeting with Brazil's Human Rights Secretary to report death threats against local farmers, Sister Dorothy was approached by two hired gunman on a dirt road in a rural area in Para. As the gunmen drew near to Sister Dorothy, she took her Bible from her bag and began to read the Beatitudes. The men fired six shots, killing her.



Ida B. Wells | 1862-1931

Ida B. Wells was a journalist who was active in early civil rights movements. Born into slavery, Ida developed a talent for writing that she put to good use. In 1884, Wells sued a train company in Memphis after

being thrown out of first class even though she had a ticket. In 1892, she published a pamphlet exposing the real story behind white mob violence and lynching.

Facing death threats, Wells moved her family to Chicago where she continued to publish articles in newspapers about lynching and the concerns of black men and women. She was active in the women's suffrage movement and was present at the 1909 founding of the NAACP in Niagara Falls. She is now considered one of that organization's founding members. In 2020, she was awarded a posthumous Pulitzer Prize for her reporting.



Eliza Barbara Williams (Mother Mary Theodore) 1868-1931

In 1887 Eliza Barbara Williams entered the Sisters of St. Francis Convent in Louisiana.

In 1912, the Archbishop disbanded the order, which was the second oldest African American religious order in the United States. Williams briefly joined the Oblate Sisters of Providence and then left religious life. Three years later, while she was working as a domestic for the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, a Georgia priest asked if she would form a teaching order because the state legislature had enacted a law barring whites and blacks from teaching and being taught by people of the opposite race. Williams formed the Franciscan Handmaids of the Most Pure Heart of Mary, who taught in Savannah until they were exiled from the city in 1921. By 1923, the order relocated to New York City where they ran the first Black Catholic nursery in Harlem, named St Benedict the Moor. In 1931 they affiliated with the

Franciscans and established the first Black Catholic primary school, St. Mary's.



Mary Lou Williams | 1910-1981

Mary Lou Williams was born in Atlanta, GA, the second of eleven children. A music prodigy, she began supporting her family at age 6 by playing the piano at parties. Over the years Williams composed and performed with jazz greats such as

Duke Ellington, Thelonious Monk and Dizzy Gillespie. In 1954, following a period in Europe, Williams converted to Catholicism and shifted her focus to composing jazz-inspired music for Catholic liturgies. In 1962 her Mass, Black Christ of the Andes, dedicated to St. Martin de Porres, was premiered at The Church of St. Francis Xavier. A later work, Mary Lou's Mass, was performed at New York's St. Patrick's Cathedral. Williams was also a philanthropist. She dedicated time and money to youth choirs, opened thrift shops in Harlem and set aside personal income to assist musicians in need. Upon her death in 1981, Williams was buried from the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola in New York.