



**Fr. Augustus Tolton  
1854-1897  
First African American  
Priest.**

Born a slave in 1854 near Hannibal, Missouri, his devout Catholic parents, Peter and Martha, named their second child in honor of St. Augustine. During the Civil War, Augustus' father fled his owner and served in the Union Army before dying of dysentery. Augustus, his mother and two siblings escaped slavery by crossing the Mississippi River in a rowboat to Illinois and freedom.

Settling in Quincy, Illinois, Martha Tolton was persistent that her children benefit from a sound Catholic education. With the help of an Irish born priest, Fr. Peter McGirr, the Tolton children were able to attend the school of St. Peter Parish, in spite of objections from many of the white parishioners. Impressed with Augustus' intelligence and character, the priest helped to encourage the young man's vocation to the priesthood. Unfortunately, due to the racial bigotry of the time, no American seminary would accept him as a student. Again with Fr. McGirr's assistance, Augustus entered the prestigious Pontifical Urbaniana University in Rome. He became fluent in Italian and proficient in Greek and Latin.

Ordained a priest in Rome in 1886 at the age of 32, Fr. Tolton had expected to be a missionary in Africa. Instead he was sent to Quincy to establish a parish and school for black Catholics. In this he met with great hostility from both local white Catholics and black Protestants. There were few converts among the black population and his brother priests largely shunned him because of his race. However, whites from a neighboring parish often packed Fr. Tolton's church to hear him preach at Sunday Mass. When the white priest of that parish complained about the situation Fr. Tolton was reassigned to Chicago in 1890.

There he established the city's first parish of black Catholics, St. Monica's. Called "Good Father Gus", he was known for his eloquent preaching and singing voice. He also traveled throughout the country speaking on the needs of black Catholics. However, the years of hard work and discrimination from within the Church and from a segregated society had broken his health. He collapsed on July 9, 1897, during a Summer heat wave in Chicago and died later that day. He was 43 years old. At his request he was buried at the cemetery of his home parish of St. Peter's in Quincy.

Today, Fr. Tolton is recognized for his courage and faith. He persevered in his vocation as a priest of Jesus Christ in spite of great opposition. A Catholic high school named in his honor is scheduled to open in Columbia, Missouri, later this year.



**Sts. Timothy & Titus  
Missionaries and Bishops**

Born in Lystra in current day central Turkey, Timothy was the son of a Greek father and Jewish mother, named Eunice. About the year 47 AD, while a child, Timothy, along with his mother and grandmother Lois, became Christians through the efforts of St. Paul the Apostle. Timothy

later joined Paul in his mission to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For some 15 years he was one of Paul's most faithful and trusted friends. Timothy was entrusted with delivering messages and letters between Paul and the different churches that the latter had founded. In the New Testament he appears in the Acts of the Apostles and is mentioned by name in nine of Paul's letters, believed written shortly before Paul's martyrdom in Rome, give advice and encouragement to Timothy in his role as a young leader, or bishop, in the early Church. Along with the Letter to Titus, they are often called the "pastoral letters".

Timothy was probably with Paul during his house arrest in Rome. Later he was imprisoned and released. By tradition, Timothy then became the first bishop of the city of Ephesus, in present western Turkey. He was martyred there in about the year 97 AD. When he opposed a public festival in honor of the pagan goddess Diana, he was seized by a mob, beaten, dragged through the streets of the city and stoned to death.

A Greek convert to Christianity, Titus was probably from the city of Antioch in modern eastern Turkey. Along with Timothy he was co-worker with Paul as a missionary. Mentioned in the New Testament letters of Second Corinthians, Galatians, and Second Timothy, Titus was seen as a peacemaker, able administrator and trusted friend to Paul. He seems also to have been something of a "trouble shooter". When he needed to give stern correction to the church in Corinth, Paul chose Titus to deliver the message to ensure that there would be reconciliation amongst the Christians.

According to the Letter to Titus, he was sent by Paul to the island of Crete to organize and lead the Christians there. By tradition, Titus became the first bishop on the island, where he continued to lead the church until his death in about the year 107 AD at the approximate age of 95.

Timothy and Titus are honored as saints in the Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, Episcopal and Lutheran churches. Their feast day in the Catholic Church is celebrated on January 26th. Sts. Timothy and Titus, pray for us!