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## Black Leaders to Propose Liturgical Changes to Make Catholicism More Relevant to Blacks--Topic of Landmark 3-Day USD Workshop

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# NEWS RELEASE UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO



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BLACK LEADERS TO PROPOSE LITURGICAL CHANGES  
TO MAKE CATHOLICISM MORE RELEVANT TO BLACKS--  
--TOPIC OF LANDMARK 3-DAY USD WORKSHOP

For the first time in the western United States, a regional 3-day conference to promote change in Catholic religious services to make them more meaningful to black people will be held June 14-16 at USD.

Changes in prayer form, prayer style, preaching style, preaching content and music will be discussed at length during the Afro-American Liturgy & Worship under the theme, "Celebrating the Gifts of the Spirit in Word & Song."

"Our liturgy is very white -- not ethnically relevant to black Catholics -- as it should be," said Father Giles Conwill, a keynote speaker at the conference and the only black Catholic priest in San Diego County.

"How can we expect the black person to be moved," he continued, "to be touched by The Word if he or she cannot relate to the way it is delivered?"

"The black style of worship only has been allowed in areas where black reverends are at the helm."

Conwill, considered a national expert on the state of blacks in Catholicism, worked 1976-80 in Washington, D.C. in the National Office of Black Catholics where his job was to encourage more blacks to become priests and nuns.

MORE

Of the estimated 58,000 priests in the United States, only 300 are black. In San Diego, there are two Catholic churches considered black parishes--St. Rita's and Christ the King, both in Southeast.

Also scheduled to speak at the workshop are:

-- Father J. George Murray, a liturgist and dramatist from Georgetown University.

-- Rawn Harbor, a nationally known composer and director of religious music from Catholic University in Washington, D.C.

-- Choreographer Stanz Petersen, nationally known for religious dance movement, from Houston, Tex. He will demonstrate ways to use sacred movement in liturgy.

Deacon Marvin Threatt, chief organizer of the workshop, pointed out that the conference will be beneficial for black and white Catholics. "Black Catholics have a certain openness, a freedom of expression that will help others to realize that it's alright to express themselves that way," Threatt said.

The San Diego Diocesan Gospel Choir will open the conference at 7 p.m. Friday, June 14, in Salomon Lecture Hall, where the entire workshop will be held.

On Saturday, the workshop begins at 9 a.m. with Father Conwill, who is currently finishing Ph.D study in anthropology at Emory University in Atlanta, Ga.

The conference closes with a 10 a.m. Mass at Christ the King Church, 29-32nd St.

The conference is sponsored by USD Graduate Program in Religious Education, the San Diego Diocesan Commission for Black Catholics and the National Office of Black Catholics.

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