

Tips on Ministering to African American Culture

- 1.) Make a point to ensure that the African American community is invited to a full participation in liturgy, leadership on councils, and join in prayer groups.
- 2.) Read the “Brothers and Sisters to Us,” and “What We Have Seen and Heard,” statements from the Black Bishops of the United States and what these mean for the ministry and parish. Most recent, the USCCB released a letter addressing racism, “Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love” that all are encouraged to read and discuss.
- 3.) AIDS/HIV is a major concern for the African American population, since 50 percent of cases occur in African Americans. Teaching and educating on AIDS and the role of the Church is something that will help this problem.
- 4.) Make the parish aware of the strong influence and leadership that the African American community has had, starting the first lay group.
- 5.) A few African Saints are:
 - St. Augustine feast day August 28
 - St. Monica feast day August 27
 - St. Benedict feast day April 12
 - St. Martin De Porres feast day November 3
 - St. Bahkita feast day February 8
 - St. Peter Claver feast day September 9
 - Venerable Augustus Tolton
 - Venerable Pierre Toussaint
 - Venerable Henriette Delille
 - Servant of God Mother Mary Lange
 - Servant of God Sr. Thea Bowman
 - Servant of God Julia Greely
- 6.) Include Kente cloth and African designs sometimes in the liturgical décor.
- 7.) Introduce and celebrate the holiday of Kwanzaa (December 26-January 1).

Kwanzaa is a unique African American celebration with focus on the traditional African values of family, community responsibility, commerce, and self-improvement.
- 8.) Implement a “Tolerance” program into the religious education process, to educate the young people on racism and the role of the church in that battle. Maybe invite an older African American who can speak to what it was like growing up with racism.
- 9.) Use the series “Enduring Faith” as a course in the parish. Make sure it is a mixed group of people. Contact the Diocesan Religious Education Office.
- 10.) 56 percent of African American children are born into a household where mother is not married to the father.
- 11.) They hold a great importance on the extended family and kin. Grandparents have a crucial role in the African family as a caregiver.