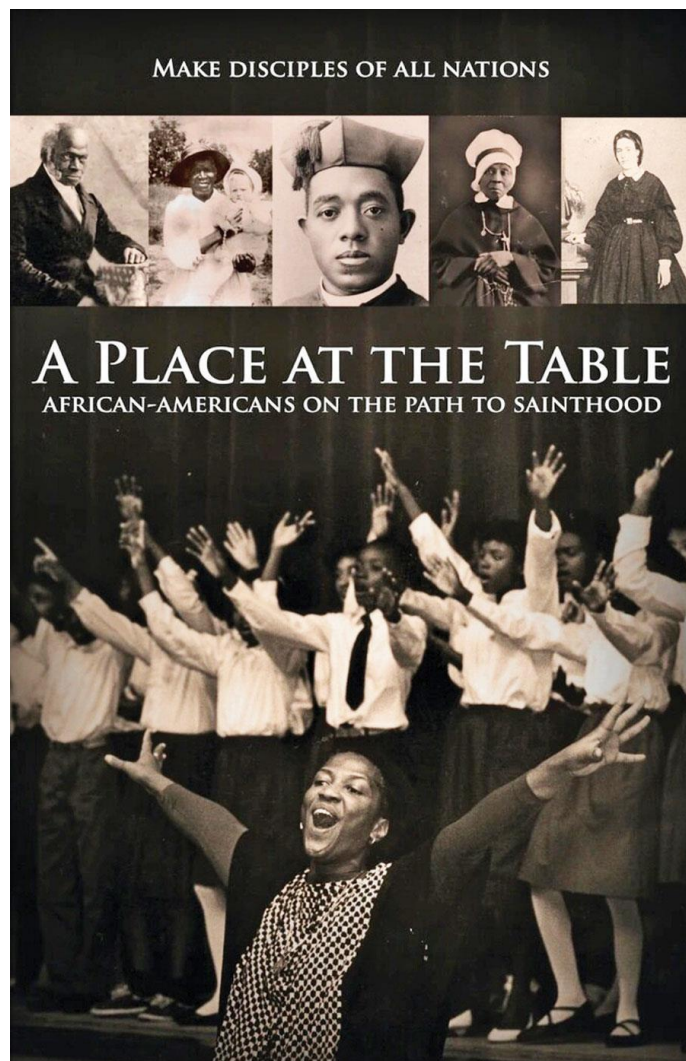




*Bound by the tenets of our faith,  
we confront racism with love,  
by listening, learning, and acting in God's grace  
to build an anti-racist church.*

## **A Place at the Table**

### **Small Group Study Guide**



# Introduction

This study guide was developed by Virginia Catholics for Racial Justice. Our hope is that this guide can facilitate small group learning and dialogue about these remarkable men and women on the path to sainthood. We welcome those who then recognize and experience their impact on our own journeys to holiness, to join us in advocating for their cause for canonization. Learn more about our **Saintly Six Initiative** at [vcrj.net](http://vcrj.net).

**The Film.** There are several ways to secure a copy of the film.

- From Stella Maris Productions. [Services 1 — A Place at the Table: African-Americans on the Path to Sainthood \(blacksaintsmovie.com\)](http://blacksaintsmovie.com)
- On YouTube (the trailer and the full video). [A Place at the Table: African-Americans on the Path to Sainthood--Official Trailer \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)
- Amazon has options for rent and purchase. [Watch A Place at the Table: African-Americans on the Path to Sainthood | Prime Video \(amazon.com\)](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08...)
- Parishes with Formed can access it through their account. <https://watch.formed.org/videos/a-place-at-the-table>.
- Access at <https://holyfamilyvb.org/summer-with-the-saintly-six>

**The Format.** The sessions are designed to be one hour (either in person or virtual) for a group of 6-15. Groups that have over 10 members may opt to break into two groups for the discussion. The sessions (especially the first) could easily go to 90 minutes if there is the option to allow for extra time.

**The Opening Prayer.** While the closing prayer is one that is associated with the featured saint in waiting, we recommend that a revised version of “Prayer before the movie A PLACE AT THE TABLE” be used to open each session. This prayer was written by Msgr. Joe Lehman (1954-2022), a passionate advocate for faith and justice, when he hosted a viewing of the film at his parish (St. Bede, Williamsburg, VA).

**Promoting the Small Group Study.** Sample bulletin announcements and flyers are included in the appendix. They are in a format that can be edited.

Materials for this guide were partially taken from *A Place at the Table: African Americans on the Road to Sainthood, Study Guide and Youth Ministry Study Guide*, Archdiocese of Indianapolis Intercultural Ministry - 1400 N. Meridian St. - Indianapolis, IN 46202. Pearlette E. Springer, Coordinator / 317-236-1474 / [pspringer@archindy.org](mailto:pspringer@archindy.org)

## Session 1: Introduction and Pierre Toussaint

### Opening Prayer

**Reader 1:** You have made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. We come before you today with hopeful and restless hearts for that day when divisions between your people will be no more – for this Jesus prayed and died, that all may be one.

**Reader 2:** Forgive us for the times when we as individuals thought of ourselves as superior to those of other races, colors, or creeds. Forgive us for the times when we gathered around our Eucharistic tables and did not welcome the stranger or greet another warmly as beloved brother or sister. Let our discussion bring us to a renewed commitment to work to welcome all people to the table of our hearts...of our homes...of our churches... and into our prayers.

**Reader 3:** Thank you for those who gather today and for their witness to their Catholic faith as we confront the challenges and embrace the opportunities in becoming the true beloved community. May our work be guided by the wisdom and power of your Holy Spirit. Through Christ our Lord. Amen

### Introductions (10)

- Name and Parish
- On a scale of 1 (never heard of them) to 10 (pray to them regularly), how well do you know this Saintly Six?

### A Place at the Table: Introduction and Venerable Pierre Toussaint (0:00:00 to 0:27:17)

### Dialogue (15)

1. What was the most important aspect of the video for you?
2. What was a new or challenging insight?
3. What about Pierre Toussaint's life of holiness inspires you and why?

### Closing Prayer

Father God, you have throughout history demonstrated that you alone can make ways out of no ways. Venerable Pierre Toussaint is our earthly example of how you used an ordinary man to perform extraordinary works of charity. We pray that like Venerable Toussaint, that you grant us your faithful the courage and fortitude to put others before ourselves, as did Venerable Toussaint when he declared "I have enough for myself but if I stop working I have not enough for others."

*From the Black Catholic History Rosary*

## Session 2: Mother Mary Lange

### Opening Prayer

**Reader 1:** You have made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. We come before you today with hopeful and restless hearts for that day when divisions between your people will be no more – for this Jesus prayed and died, that all may be one.

**Reader 2:** Forgive us for the times when we as individuals thought of ourselves as superior to those of other races, colors, or creeds. Forgive us for the times when we gathered around our Eucharistic tables and did not welcome the stranger or greet another warmly as beloved brother or sister. Let our discussion bring us to a renewed commitment to work to welcome all people to the table of our hearts...of our homes...of our churches... and into our prayers.

**Reader 3:** Thank you for those who gather today and for their witness to their Catholic faith as we confront the challenges and embrace the opportunities in becoming the true beloved community. May our work be guided by the wisdom and power of your Holy Spirit. Through Christ our Lord. Amen

### Introductions (10)

- Name and Parish (if there are new people)
- Who is your “patron” saint and why?

### A Place at the Table: Venerable Mother Mary Lange (0:27:19 to 0:41:52)

### Dialogue (30)

1. What was the most important aspect of the video for you?
2. What was a new or challenging insight?
3. What about Mother Mary Lange’s life of holiness inspires you and why?
4. If you, like Mother Mary Lange, had to “found” a community centered on Christ, what would be your mandate or Charism?

### Closing Prayer

Father God, we are so appreciative and grateful that you inspired Venerable Mother Mary Lange, OSP to found the Oblate Sisters of Providence to provide educational, social and spiritual ministry to the people of God. Help us, like Mother Mary Lange, not to allow the inexpressible pain of prejudice and racial hatred weaken our resolve to do your will. Father, we call upon your name to instill in your pilgrim people an attitude of gratitude as we do your will. Father, we ask that our resolve be that of Mother Mary Lange, who said “our sole will is to do the will of God!”

*From the Black Catholic History Rosary*

## Session 3: Henriette Delille

### Opening Prayer

**Reader 1:** You have made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. We come before you today with hopeful and restless hearts for that day when divisions between your people will be no more – for this Jesus prayed and died, that all may be one.

**Reader 2:** Forgive us for the times when we as individuals thought of ourselves as superior to those of other races, colors, or creeds. Forgive us for the times when we gathered around our Eucharistic tables and did not welcome the stranger or greet another warmly as beloved brother or sister. Let our discussion bring us to a renewed commitment to work to welcome all people to the table of our hearts...of our homes...of our churches... and into our prayers.

**Reader 3:** Thank you for those who gather today and for their witness to their Catholic faith as we confront the challenges and embrace the opportunities in becoming the true beloved community. May our work be guided by the wisdom and power of your Holy Spirit. Through Christ our Lord. Amen

### Introductions (10)

- Name and Parish (if there are new people)
- We all have personal saints in our lives that are not “canonized” by the church. Can you tell us about one of yours?

### A Place at the Table: Venerable Henriette DeLille (41:52 to 0:55:22)

### Dialogue (30)

1. What was the most important aspect of the video for you? What was a new or challenging insight?
2. What about Venerable Henriette Delille’s life of holiness inspires you and why?
3. Our faith tradition calls us to service to God and for God. What ministry do you feel called to? Have you ever been rejected to do the ministry of your calling? If so, how did you respond?

### Closing Prayer

Father God, as always, it was your infinite wisdom and grace that inspired Venerable Henriette Delille to found the Holy Family Sisters to nurse the sick and elderly, care for the poor and instruct the unlearned. We pray that you lead us, as you so fervently led Venerable Henriette Delille, for the love of Jesus to become a humble and devout servant to those who continued to face and be challenged by the many injustices of our time.

*From the Black Catholic History Rosary*

## Session 4: Augustus Tolton

### Opening Prayer

**Reader 1:** You have made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. We come before you today with hopeful and restless hearts for that day when divisions between your people will be no more – for this Jesus prayed and died, that all may be one.

**Reader 2:** Forgive us for the times when we as individuals thought of ourselves as superior to those of other races, colors, or creeds. Forgive us for the times when we gathered around our Eucharistic tables and did not welcome the stranger or greet another warmly as beloved brother or sister. Let our discussion bring us to a renewed commitment to work to welcome all people to the table of our hearts...of our homes...of our churches... and into our prayers.

**Reader 3:** Thank you for those who gather today and for their witness to their Catholic faith as we confront the challenges and embrace the opportunities in becoming the true beloved community. May our work be guided by the wisdom and power of your Holy Spirit. Through Christ our Lord. Amen

### Introductions (10)

- Name and Parish (if there are new people)
- In the last week, did anyone have an insight from the video and discussion about Venerable Henriette DeLille, or a way that the material touched your life?

### A Place at the Table: Venerable Augustus Tolton (55:22 to 1:11:08)

### Dialogue (30)

1. What was the most important aspect of the video for you? What was a new or challenging insight?
2. What about Venerable Father Augustus Tolton's life of holiness inspires you and why?
3. Deus ex machina, God intervening... Give an example of "Deus ex machina" in your life.

### Closing Prayer

Father God, you empowered your faithful Venerable Father Augustus Tolton to overcome the adversities, prejudices and challenges of his time. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Servant of God Tolton was able to become a Catholic priest and serve the people of God in Quincy and Chicago, Illinois. Today we stand in the shadow of his ministry. Heavenly Father, grant that our lives be inspired by the Holy Spirit. Instill in us the spirit of confidence and hope that we may serve your people with the charity and compassion that was so eloquently demonstrated by the Venerable Father Augustus Tolton.

*From the Black Catholic History Rosary*

## Session 5: Julia Greeley

### Opening Prayer

**Reader 1:** You have made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. We come before you today with hopeful and restless hearts for that day when divisions between your people will be no more – for this Jesus prayed and died, that all may be one.

**Reader 2:** Forgive us for the times when we as individuals thought of ourselves as superior to those of other races, colors, or creeds. Forgive us for the times when we gathered around our Eucharistic tables and did not welcome the stranger or greet another warmly as beloved brother or sister. Let our discussion bring us to a renewed commitment to work to welcome all people to the table of our hearts...of our homes...of our churches... and into our prayers.

**Reader 3:** Thank you for those who gather today and for their witness to their Catholic faith as we confront the challenges and embrace the opportunities in becoming the true beloved community. May our work be guided by the wisdom and power of your Holy Spirit. Through Christ our Lord. Amen

### Introductions (10)

- Name and Parish (if there are new people)
- In the last week, did anyone have an insight from the video and discussion, or a way that the material touched your life, that you want to share?

### A Place at the Table: Servant of God Julia Greeley (1:11:08 to 1:27:25)

### Dialogue (30)

1. What was the most important aspect of the video for you? What was a new or challenging insight?
2. What about Servant of God Julia Greeley's life of holiness inspires you and why?
3. Have you ever spent time in adoration of the Eucharist? How do you describe that experience?

### Closing Prayer

Father God, you moved in the heart of your faithful Servant Julia Greeley who, despite the racial injustices she experienced, did not waver in caring for the poor and spreading devotion to the Sacred Heart, especially among firefighters. Doing the little things that we all can do that make a difference in people's lives, Julia embodies true discipleship in taking care of her brothers and sisters and giving others all that she had. We pray that like Julia Greeley, you grant us the charity that flows from trust in Jesus' providence, so that giving becomes a privilege and a joy.

*From the Black Catholic History Rosary*

## Session 6: Sister Thea Bowman

### Opening Prayer

**Reader 1:** You have made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. We come before you today with hopeful and restless hearts for that day when divisions between your people will be no more – for this Jesus prayed and died, that all may be one.

**Reader 2:** Forgive us for the times when we as individuals thought of ourselves as superior to those of other races, colors, or creeds. Forgive us for the times when we gathered around our Eucharistic tables and did not welcome the stranger or greet another warmly as beloved brother or sister. Let our discussion bring us to a renewed commitment to work to welcome all people to the table of our hearts...of our homes...of our churches... and into our prayers.

**Reader 3:** Thank you for those who gather today and for their witness to their Catholic faith as we confront the challenges and embrace the opportunities in becoming the true beloved community. May our work be guided by the wisdom and power of your Holy Spirit. Through Christ our Lord. Amen

### Introductions (10)

- Name and Parish (if there are new people)
- In the last week, did anyone have an insight from the video and discussion, or a way that the material touched your life, that you want to share?

### A Place at the Table: Servant of God Sister Thea Bowman (1:27:25 to 1:57)

### Dialogue (30)

1. What was the most important aspect of the video for you? Was there a new or challenging insight?
2. What about Servant of God Sister Thea Bowman's life of holiness inspires you and why?
3. After being diagnosed with breast cancer, Sr. Thea Bowman's motto was, "I'm going to live till I die!" What are your thoughts on how you could live out that motto?
4. What is the work of the church? What is your responsibility to help in the work? What are some things that can strengthen and empower you to complete this work?

### Closing Prayer

**Reader 1:** Father God, who by your infinite goodness inflamed the heart of your servant and religious, Sr. Thea Bowman with an ardent love for you and the People of God; a love expressed through her indomitable spirit, deep and abiding faith, dedicated teaching, exuberant singing, and unwavering witnessing of the joy of the Gospel.

**Reader 2:** Her prophetic witness continues to inspire us to share the Good News with those whom we encounter; most especially the poor, oppressed, and marginalized. May Sr. Thea's life and legacy compel us to walk together, to pray together, and to remain together as missionary disciples ushering in the new evangelization for the Church we love.



**Reader 3:** Gracious God, imbue us with the grace and perseverance that you gave your servant, Sr. Thea. For in turbulent times of racial injustice, she sought equity, peace, and reconciliation. In times of intolerance and ignorance, she brought wisdom, awareness, unity, and charity. In times of pain, sickness, and suffering, she taught us how to live fully until called home to the land of promise. We ask this through our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

## Promotional Resources

### Bulletin Announcement



This summer, journey with Holy Family parishioners and friends over six weeks as we reflect on the lives of **Venerable Pierre Toussaint, Venerable Mother Mary Lange, Venerable Henriette Delille, Venerable Augustus Tolton, Servant of God Julia Greeley, and Servant of God, Thea Bowman.** Discover how these timeless exemplars of holiness can inspire us to live out our faith. We will be viewing the documentary, *A Place at the Table: African Americans on the Path to Sainthood*, and each session will focus on one candidate's story followed by a facilitated discussion. **Several days and times of the week are being offered from June 9<sup>th</sup> to August 15<sup>th</sup> to accommodate schedules.**

- **(6) One-hour sessions**
- **Offered via Zoom and in-person**
- **No cost to participate**

For group offerings and to register, go to [www.holyfamilyvb.org](http://www.holyfamilyvb.org). If you have any questions, please contact Abby Causey, Director of Evangelization, at [abby@holyfamilyvb.org](mailto:abby@holyfamilyvb.org).



# SUMMER *with The* SAINTLY SIX



Fortitude. Perseverance. Steadfast Faith.

This summer, journey with us over six weeks as we reflect on the lives of these timeless exemplars of holiness who inspire us to live out our faith.



We will be viewing the documentary, **A Place at the Table: African Americans on the Path to Sainthood**. Each session will focus on one candidate's story followed by a facilitated discussion.

