

Address written for [REDACTED] delivered at the blessing of the new memorial at [REDACTED] as part of the [REDACTED] Juneteenth observance. Companion document to the video of the address; text is unaltered from the original script.

Juneteenth memorial blessing, address

[REDACTED] | [REDACTED] | [REDACTED]

Good morning! Happy Juneteenth, brothers and sisters! It's a great day for blessing the new memorial at [REDACTED]

This year, the theme for Juneteenth is Perfecting Unity, intending to unite all Americans in the celebration of our common bond of freedom through recognition, observance, and historic preservation. This is why today is the perfect day for the new dedication of the [REDACTED] memorial. This gravesite is holy land and a site most worthy of historic preservation.

[REDACTED] was given to the Roman Catholic [REDACTED] for burying the Colored Roman Catholic population of [REDACTED]. For many years, this cemetery has stood empty, with almost any sign of its previous use wiped out. Many [REDACTED] residents have no idea that this is a historical site for Black Catholics, but we have never forgotten the significance of those buried here, especially those that are joined here with us today. Many of you have stories of how you, as children, walked across this graveyard on your way to school at [REDACTED]. I can only imagine the stories you can tell!

What became of the repose of the dead here in this place? As stated in the research document titled [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

...Much history of Black Catholics is unwritten but can be stitched together in a patchwork design from scattered and sometimes conflicting stories; [REDACTED] offers one of the more concrete sources of information.

This finding holds true in many places and especially in our diocese. There is still so much we can learn, but I want to recognize [REDACTED] with the [REDACTED] here in [REDACTED] for initiating this historical document on [REDACTED]. Thank you for your efforts and for your faith.

As for the story of Juneteenth, on [REDACTED] of the [REDACTED] arrived in Texas. He brought the news that the Civil War had ended, and all slaves were free.

The Black Catholics buried in this place experienced Juneteenth in [REDACTED]. One can imagine the stories that can be told by the dearly departed we are honoring today: stories of being both a slave and a free person, stories of their jobs, and of their experiences fighting for equality. Oh, the stories that could be told by those buried here. We can learn so much from their life stories.

Black history is American history. It is also a part of Church history. And although the Church dedicates [REDACTED] as Black Catholic History month, we should remember and celebrate it every day as we are all united in Christ who is love.

On this day, we not only celebrate the end of the evil practice of slavery in America but also pay respect and honor to those that have gone before us. May we use this day to strengthen, serve and elevate the Black community in this state for the common good.

Let us all use the new dedication of [REDACTED] as an example of letting go of past faults and the start of fixing and improving things to make us better than we were and to bring us together in "perfect unity."

This cemetery, which was once lost in time and indifference, will once again remind those who visit it of the extraordinary experience of Catholicism in the Black community. This place, even in death, shows the spiritual unity which makes all Catholics members of one family.

This is our history, brothers and sisters. Let us rejoice!