

Basilica Parishioners at the National Black Catholic Congress

Growing in faith

BY MAE DESAIRE



Basilica Members at the National Black Catholic Congress (NBCC) in National Harbor, Maryland, July 20 -July 23, 2023
(Left to Right) Andrena Guines, Frank Christopher, Eve Black, Grace Rouser, Colin Rouser, Mary Noble, Andrea Lutterman, Fr. Daniel Griffith, Felicia De Santos, Carole Burton, Janice Andersen, Director of Christian Life at The Basilica

Then Basilica parishioners joined Fr. Daniel Griffith in attending the National Black Catholic Congress (NBCC) in National Harbor, Maryland, July 20-23, 2023. They joined over 3,000 Black Catholics from over 80 dioceses in the U.S. to build community as they prayed, praised, and participated in workshops. The gathering represented 3% of Black Catholics in the United States.

They shared fellowship, prayer, and music together, while learning, sharing, and growing in faith. The group attended Mass with Wilton Cardinal Gregory and toured the National Museum for African American History and Culture. They participated in a service project and packed 75,000 packets of apple-cinnamon oatmeal for the organization No Child Hungry.

The group returned to Minneapolis renewed and rejuvenated to share their experiences with The Basilica community.

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Recently Felicia De Santos shared his perspectives with *BASILICA* magazine. Felicia is a member of The Basilica's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Leadership Team that is chaired by Frank Christopher.

Is this the first NBCC you have attended? What were your hopes and expectations for attending the conference?

First time. Greater exposure to the Black Catholic experience, the opportunity to deepen empathy about community issues, and inspiration/resources for the work of the Basilica's EDI initiatives.

What was the most significant moment for you at the conference? What was your biggest takeaway from attending the conference?

The worship services were wonderful! There was an altar call for the youth who felt called to explore a religious vocation and I was amazed by the age range and number of young people who went forward. I cried unashamedly because in them was the hope of our faith community.

Biggest takeaway from attending the conference—the magnitude of this group of people, the depth of their faith, and

the vibrance and joy of their worship practices (influenced by culture) should be experienced. The way we worship would be largely unfulfilling and somewhat sterile in comparison. There is room for inclusion of such joy and love for Christ!

What ignited the most conversation from The Basilica group who attended? Did the group connect with each other over the three days together?

The schedule was hectic but we moved together, covering different learning sessions and sharing insights afterward. We ate together, volunteered together, and took quiet moments together. We had an active group text going through the entire experience. Those who had attended

before ensured that they guided us into the fullness of the experience. We have deepened trust and connection as members of the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Leadership Team as a result of this shared experience. ✚

Mae Desaire, Director of Marketing and Communications



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The National Black Catholic Congress (NBCC) represents African American Roman Catholics and Affiliated Organizations. The mission is based on the baptismal commitment to witness and proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. More information about the National Black Catholic Congress can be found at nbccongress.org.