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## **RESPONDING TO THE CALL**

### **A Conversation with Sr. Jamie Phelps, O.P., Ph.D.**

**Kimberly Flint-Hamilton, Ph.D., St. Lawrence University**  
**Cecilia Moore, Ph.D., University of Dayton**  
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Sr. Jamie Phelps, O.P., Ph.D.<sup>1</sup>

Sr. Jamie Phelps, O.P., Ph. D., is one of the most significant shapers of and contributors to Black Catholic Theology. A charter member of two seminal organizations for the field, The Institute for Black Catholic Studies (IBCS) and the Black Catholic Theological Symposium (BCTS), her tenacity and passion helped pave the way for Black Catholic studies. At the IBCS, she served as Director and as Katherine Drexel Professor of Systematic Theology for eight years. After the first two meetings of the BCTS in 1978 and 1980, the organization became inactive for more than a decade. It was Sr. Jamie, along with Dr. Shawn Copeland, who re-invigorated it in 1991, serving as convenor and associate convenor, respectively, for the next decade. Sr. Jamie's work with the IBCS and the BCTS created space both to educate and support pastoral ministers

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<sup>1</sup>*Adrian Dominican Sisters*, "What's Happening: Sister Jamie Phelps, OP, Discusses Spirituality," March 2, 2021, accessed July 5, 2021, <https://adriandominicans.org/News/sister-jamie-phelps-op-discusses-black-spirituality>.

in Black Catholic history and spirituality, and to foster scholars of Black Catholic theology, providing regular forums to convene, share ideas and ultimately publish their work. Her books, *Black and Catholic: The Challenge and Gift of Black Folk*<sup>2</sup> and *Stamped in the Image of God*<sup>3</sup>, are foundational to the field. Additionally, Sr. Jamie has published more than fifty articles and chapters that have appeared in some of the most prominent scholarly books and journals in the field, and she has taught and lectured extensively. For her incredible contributions, she has been recognized by the Catholic Theological Society of America<sup>4</sup> and Cambridge's *Who's Who* for demonstrating dedication, leadership, and excellence in Religious Studies.<sup>5</sup> She was also awarded an honorary doctoral degree from Aquinas Institute in 2016.<sup>6</sup>

On a hot July day in 2011 at the IBCS in New Orleans, the four of us - Kimberly Flint-Hamilton, Cecilia Moore, Steve Hamilton, and Sr. Jamie - had the pleasure of sitting down to talk about Sr. Jamie's life and contributions. She focused on family, education, and vocation. Though we were interrupted by a fire alarm not quite halfway into our conversation, we still had a delightful conversation filled with fond memories and laughter. A decade later, we had a follow-up conversation with her.

*"I am what I am today because of God mediated through my family"*

Sr. Jamie reminisced affectionately about her family and about growing up in Chicago. Originally from Alabama, her father, Alfred Phelps, and mother, Emma Brown Phelps, were both born in 1911. Her father was the owner of a small business. He bought, repaired, resold, and installed refrigeration units in small stores and restaurants. The family moved to Chicago in 1942, when Sr. Jamie was only a few months old, as part of

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<sup>2</sup> Jamie Phelps, O.P. (editor), *Black and Catholic: The Challenge and Gift of Black Folk*, Marquette University Press 1998.

<sup>3</sup> Cyprian Davis, O.S.B. and Jamie Phelps, O.P., *Stamped in the Image of God: African Americans as God's Image in Black* (New York: Orbis Books, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Fox, "Dominican Sister Jamie T. Phelps Honored at CTSA," June 11, 2010, accessed August 2, 2021, <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/dominican-sister-jamie-t-phelps-honored-ctsa>.

<sup>5</sup> Sr. Jamie Phelps, O.P., Ph.D., Honored By Cambridge Who's Who for Excellence in Religious Studies, August 16, 2011, accessed July 31, 2021, <https://www.24-7pressrelease.com/press-release/229820/sister-jamie-t-phelps-op-phd-honored-by-cambridge-whos-who-for-excellence-in-religious-studies>.

<sup>6</sup> Adrian Dominican Sisters, "What's Happening: Sister Jamie Phelps Recognized for her Dedicated Church Ministry," March 10, 2016, accessed August 31, 2021, <https://adriandominicans.org/News/sister-jamie-phelps-recognized-for-her-dedicated-church-ministry>.

the Great Migration which created the first large urban Black communities in the Northern United States.

My family is very important in my life. I am what I am today not only because of God, naturally, but also God mediated through my family. I had a pretty charmed life as a child. We not only integrated the downtown parish, but we also integrated our grade school. And it was interesting, I think that's where I got my first gender conscience.

The Phelps family valued education and they sent the children to Catholic schools. Mr. and Mrs. Phelps specifically chose a predominantly white Catholic school – St. Matthew's School – because they believed that the teachers' expectations would be lower in predominantly Black schools. They wanted their children to be challenged and to have the best chances in life, which meant ensuring that the children were held to the highest educational standards so that they would receive the best possible education. The Phelps family was among the first to integrate Holy Name Cathedral.

The Phelps household was situated in the middle of a Chicago city block and it became the hub of activity for the neighborhood children. Children all over the neighborhood congregated there to laugh, play, enjoy each other's company, listen to music on the Victrola, and learn the latest dance steps. All in all, the community was a safe and healthy one in which neighbors looked out for each other and for the children.

As a young child, Sr. Jamie learned from her older brothers and sisters as they did their homework and became socialized into the community, so by the time she began attending school herself she was already ahead of the class. She also knew what she could and couldn't get away with in the family.

Looking at the dynamic with six children, every time when they were chastised for doing something wrong, I'm looking at this as if I've seen this five times, so why would I fall into the trap of doing what I'm not supposed to do, you know? And, when they were studying, I was studying with them, so by the time I got to the classroom I had already reviewed some of the materials, so school was very easy for me.



Top: Sr. Jamie; on the couch, left to right: Sr. Jamie's sister Marionette, her mother Emma Brown Phelps, and her sister Alfreda

#### *The Little Neighbors Social Service Savings Club*

Sr. Jamie remembers her neighborhood very much as a large extended family where all the adults were viewed as parents of all the children, and it was in that context that she developed a social conscience. There was one person in particular who taught the value of saving and service - Mrs. Fulmer Mickey.

In those days anybody's children were everybody's children. All of the adults were our parents and we were required to respect them, and if there was any incident where we disrespected a person, an adult in the neighborhood had permission to chastise us. And I mention this because of the contrast with today's society. Back then they could chastise us and tell us we were wrong. We had a block mother, Mrs. Fulmar Mickey, who had no children of her own but considered all of us her children. She created clubs for us, and we formed a little club on our own after we got up from under her mother-ship - you know how you get independent - and so we started *the Little Neighbors Social Service Savings Club*. So, in that club we had

to help the elders and we had to save money, and Mrs. Mickey was teaching us how to do that.

The children in the club pooled their earnings and allowance. They used the money to have luncheons. Here was one of the situations in which Sr. Jamie developed a gender consciousness.

The kids would get together and have lunch together at my Mom's house on the back porch. And we'd have bologna sandwiches and Kool-Aid. We'd have like ten cents and we'd go into the meat market and ask for ten cents worth of bologna. And the butcher would smile and of course give us enough bologna, much more than ten cents worth but he thought it was so cute that we were putting our money together and doing this. We had a sense of community even as kids, you know, and I got to make the sandwiches. We'd buy mayonnaise, bread, bologna, and Kool-Aid, and we'd make the sandwiches and the Kool-Aid, and the boys would sit around and eat and I would be serving them.

*"We would debrief the day"*

There were only a handful of Black children in the school Sr. Jamie and her siblings attended, and the teachers were unaccustomed to, and often uncomfortable with, the racial dynamic. Some of the things they said and did demonstrated their discomfort, and sometimes even fear, of the children, especially the little boys. Sr. Jamie describes some of the ways that race impacted her during elementary school.

My sisters and I had no problems with the sisters, but my brother Julius started getting into trouble with them. It wasn't that he was a bad little guy, though he did have a mischievous side. But the nuns were so afraid of this nine-year old little Black child that they over-reacted in their punishment. I'll tell you an example - back in the '40s and '50s, throwing spitballs was a common thing for little boys to do. Julius' punishment for throwing a spitball in class was to make 1000 spitballs, throw them in the gym huge floor and then pick them all up again. To me, it was a huge over-reaction.

The teachers looked at me as the ideal little Black girl, a good student. But I remember once one of my brother's teachers called me to his room to embarrass my brother by saying, 'Look how good she is, if only Julius was just like her.' I did not appreciate that. I had to play the game and be smiling when she was saying it, but inside I was furious. As little kids we would go over to a friend's house after school and would debrief the day as the only Black kids in a predominately white school. We laughed at the things that the nuns had done to us that day in school. That was our way of handling it. We were taught to respect the nuns, so we would not ever be able to speak back to them even when they were wrong.

### *Sr. Jamie's Call to Religious Life*

In Catholic school, the topic of vocation was one that the nuns and priests brought up on a regular basis. For Sr. Jamie, however, the call came even before elementary school. She was very young, only 4 or 5 years old.

But even before [elementary school] as a little child when I was like four or five, because my family's sole orientation was to help the community, I started thinking about using my gifts for the community. I started thinking when I was younger, okay, what am I going to do? A nurse helps the body, a teacher helps the mind, but a nun helps the soul. And see, back in those days, the soul was the highest thing, and I thought, well why not go for it? So I do think my calling came at a very young age, though most people don't believe that. But I do remember at age four or, five, six, even before getting in school.

*"These women were joyful ... they were normal people"*

Sr. Jamie has been a member of the Adrian Dominican order since she took her vows in 1959. Though others came before her, Sr. Jamie was the first African American Adrian Dominican sister who stayed in the community. She chose the Adrians because of their joy. They smiled, they were kind to children, they seemed to get along with one another, they danced with the children and played Double Dutch. And the Adrians valued education. Every sister who joined earned a college degree, and most earned master's degrees. Their support of the community, joyful

spirit, and appreciation for education made them a perfect match for Sr. Jamie, though her father took some persuading.

I visited them in the convent, and I really was attracted to the Adrian Dominicans because these women were joyful, they smiled, they were caring with the kids. Now they would discipline us but even the discipline was not harsh, and I saw the joy they had with each other, I saw them having positive relationships and joyful relationships with the priest. If there was any conflict, if there was any argument, I never saw it, and yet they were real, you know, they would dance with us, they would Double Dutch with us. They were normal people. My father had some hesitancy about it. Even though they wanted to send us to integrated schools he wasn't sure that I should want to live with white people all my life. He was afraid that they would make me do all the domestic work because I was Black rather than educate me.

But because I was so good in school that when I went to college, I was in the upper ten, and people who were good in school in my order went on to graduate school. Actually, in the Adrian Dominicans everybody finished college and the majority of our Adrian Dominicans have one master's degree. Most have two master's and a smaller but even still a large group have doctoral degrees. So as Dominicans, our thing is study and action, contemplation and action. They prized education just as my family did and that was one of those things that resonated. My family was into education, the order was into education.

True to their reputation, the Adrians supported Sr. Jamie as she sought to continue her education. She completed her bachelor's degree in sociology at Siena Heights University in Adrian, Michigan in 1969. She went on to complete an MSW from University of Illinois Chicago in 1972, an MA from St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota in 1975, and a PhD in Systematic Theology from The Catholic University of America in 1989. For her doctoral studies, she did research on John R. Slattery, the founder of the Josephites whose primary ministry is dedicated exclusively to cross-cultural ministry to and with African Americans. Sr. Jamie commented on a fascinating coincidence she uncovered during her studies:



When I was doing my research in the Josephite Archives, the archivist looked up my personal baptismal record and family records from St. James Church in Pritchard, Alabama. Imagine my surprise when I discovered that I had been baptized, as an infant, by a Black Josephite!

### *Postulancy*

Sr. Jamie described the first stage of religious formation, the *postulancy*. This is the period of time right after entering a religious community during which new members learn about the community - a probationary period. In Sr. Jamie's words:

It's the first stage of when you enter. You don't have any vows yet, and they put you in a little black skirt and black top and they're teaching you the routine of religious life. And they're looking at you to see if you really have a vocation, and you're looking at them to ask yourself do I have a vocation to this order? Is there a match?

Remembering her postulancy brought back a warm feeling of nostalgia for Sr. Jamie. A one of about 140 teenage girls in her class, life was always interesting. She, with the other young women, was required to observe the *Grand Silence*<sup>7</sup> – a length of time lasting from the ringing of the evening bell after dinner until after morning prayer the next day. During this period, no one was permitted to speak. It lasted about 12 hours every day. Sr. Jamie reflected on the Grand Silence and the punishments that were doled out to the postulants who strayed:

If you didn't keep the silence, you got a little penance. It might be some prayers or some work over and above what you were normally assigned. And the worst punishment was getting assigned a *floor dish*. What that meant is you had to eat your meal sitting on the floor in front of the Mother General. So there were two embarrassments, first of all, sitting on the floor, second of all, doing it in front of a big congregation. Now look, I'm a little Black girl. Mother General may not recognize my classmates who are white because

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<sup>7</sup> Also referred to as the *Great Silence*.

there were so many, but when the one little Black girl had a floor dish, it was obvious. And then we made a game out of that, you know, kids, teenagers will make a game out of anything. And so there was a post, Mother General had a little table for herself with the senior professed sisters. But there was a post in front of her table, so if you were assigned a floor dish as a discipline, you would try to get to the post so you had something to lean your back on, but if you didn't get to the post you would have to be sitting up straight with the plate or tray on your lap, which was totally awkward.

There were many fun memories of this time for Sr. Jamie, but she also faced barriers during the formation period. Sr. Jamie felt very strongly that her call from God was not to be ignored, no matter what distractions she may have encountered.

My thought was, if I have a call to religious life, if God has called me, I was not going to let anything, even though it's stupid, or any person stop me from responding to that call. Because I don't play with God. If God called me, I want to follow that.

We asked Sr. Jamie specifically whether she encountered racism, either within the religious community or in the parishes in which she worked and served. Her response indicated that, even when she did, none of it mattered because she always had the support she needed.

You know, because I was black, I had access to the Mother General and the Postulant Mistress in ways that my classmates did not. And there was always a small group of my classmates who had my back, so I had a little sub-community within this larger community. I'm sure there were people sitting in those pews saying, what in the world is this little Black chocolate child doing here? But it didn't matter, because God provided me a primary nurturing group where I could be myself, and they were real with me, so what the other folks were saying and thinking didn't matter. My vocation was a matter between me and my God. And I wasn't going to let somebody else's racism force me to disobey God.

And because I had enough support within that subgroup with the major leadership, I mean, they were looking at me closely, but I got to know these women, as women. They definitely were not my peers, but I had all the people there with authority. I always had access to the people who had power and who made decisions about my staying or going. And there might have been people in that group that didn't want me to stay but there were enough voices, so I had.... God had advocates for me.

### *Vatican II*

The Second Vatican Council, which lasted from 1962 until 1965, presented an opportunity for the Church to reconsider its place in the changing world. One result of the Council was to urge women's religious orders to reconsider their traditional dress, the habit. "After a period of experimentation, most renewed congregations successfully made the transition to simple contemporary dress appropriate to their quite varied ministerial lives."<sup>8</sup> Sr. Jamie shared her thoughts about the habit:

What we were trying to do was to make ourselves more available to the people. Even the changing of the habit, for some people the religious habit was a barrier or it allowed them to be a different personality. And we thought that we needed to be able to flow with the people in less restrictive ways so that we could talk to the real persons. When I was in Chicago, I had a number of young adults that I ministered to, and they were more comfortable with me without my habit - the habit would have been a barrier. Now there is another whole set of people who are more comfortable with me with the habit. But I would say, we need nuns in habits, and we also need nuns who wear regular dress.

More than the habit changed, however. Sr. Jamie reflects on the social transformation catalyzed by Vatican II:

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<sup>8</sup> Richard McBrien, "Women Religious' Embrace of Vatican II Change Commendable," *National Catholic Reporter*, November 21, 2011, accessed August 17, 2021, <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/essays-theology/women-religious-embrace-vatican-ii-change-commendable>.

As Black women and men in predominantly white orders we asked ourselves, what were our roles and responsibility in a changing religious life, and what were our roles in the social transformation called for by the Civil Rights Movement? The Second Vatican Council documents told us that we must be involved in the world. Accordingly, we had a responsibility, and the permission of the Second Vatican Council, to be involved in the struggle for racial justice that the Civil Rights Movement focused on. As Blacks we had to ask how are we involved in Civil Rights? But as an Adrian Dominican, I was not permitted to even think about going to Selma and I was not permitted to march. When they were rioting on the west side of Chicago where I had grown up, I couldn't go home to see my family – no sister from my order was supposed to go the West side.

Being forbidden to go to Selma was particularly grating for Sr. Jamie. One of the priests who taught with her in 1965, Fr. Richard Morrisroe who at the time was a diocesan priest at St. Columbanus parish, was allowed to go Selma. He was shot and wounded in the march.<sup>9</sup>

*The first National Black Sisters Conference in 1968*

In 1968, the National Black Sisters' Conference (NBSC)<sup>10</sup> was born. At its first meeting at Carlow College in Pittsburgh, more than 150 Black women religious gathered from 79 different national and international congregations.<sup>11</sup> Inspired by the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus which formed earlier in that same year, these extraordinary women developed a vision:

In covenant with God and with one another, as Black women religious and associates of the National Black Sisters' Conference, we are willing to be risk takers; taking a stand and working for the liberation of Black people.

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<sup>9</sup> S.L. Wisenberg, "How a Chicago Priest Became an Unwitting Civil Rights Figure," Chicago Reader, August 31, 2015, accessed August 21, 2021, <https://chicagoreader.com/news-politics/how-a-chicago-priest-became-an-unwitting-civil-rights-figure/>.

<sup>10</sup> Marquette University Special Collections and University Archives, "National Black Sisters Conference," accessed August 15, 2021. <https://www.marquette.edu/library/archives/Mss/NBSC/NBSC-sc.php>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

Drawing strength and courage from God and one another, we choose to study, speak, and act on issues that impact Black people globally.<sup>12</sup>

Sr. Jamie was present at that first historic meeting of the NBSC, and she has been a regular member of this group ever since. Here, she reflects on the impact it had on her:

That was exciting because, although I knew about the Black orders, I was in a predominantly white order and I had no notion of what that was like to be with all Black sisters. When our Mercy Sister in Pittsburgh [Sr. Martin de Porres Grey, RSM], who had sat in on the first session of the National Black Clergy Caucus, got the inspiration to convene the Black sisters, it was exciting because there we were, with all our different habits, and we were all Black nuns, you know. They had written to all the congregations asking them for the names of their Black sisters and asking them to give their Black sisters permission to come to this meeting.



The First National Black Sisters Conference, August 1968 (Sr. Jamie Phelps, circled)<sup>13</sup> Photo printed with permission of NBSC.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Jaimee A. Swift, "Radical Habits: Unearthing the History of the Black Catholic Nuns in the Black Freedom Struggle," Black Women Radicals, accessed August 10, 2021, <https://www.blackwomenradicals.com/blog-feed/radicals-habits-unearthing-the-history-of-black-catholic-nuns-in-the-black-freedom-struggle>.



2019 National Black Sisters Conference (Sr. Jamie Phelps circled)<sup>14</sup>  
Photo printed with permission of NBSC.

#### *The IBCS and the BCTS*

We asked Sr. Jamie about her role in helping create and foster the Institute for Black Catholic Studies and the Black Catholic Theological Symposium. She shared her thoughts on her work with Thaddeus Posey, O.F.M. Cap., who launched the initiative:

I was in my doctoral program when we started those first meetings in the 1970s. Thaddeus Posey was the founder. I was studying theology in my doctoral program, so even though he had studied theology too, he thought it was good for someone who was doing contemporary theology under her belt. So I became a consultant for the Black Catholic Theological Symposium. We decided at that first symposium that we needed to have a place for the ongoing education of the priests and others. We had to bring the proposal to Xavier University, and Thaddeus wanted me to come and give a theological argumentation presentation about why we needed the Institute to the Xavier faculty. Because this was about being Black and Catholic, as the only Black Catholic university in the United States, it was logical that Xavier University would be the location for the Black Catholic Theological

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<sup>14</sup> National Black Sisters Conference, accessed August 17, 2021, <https://www.nbsc68.com/>.

Symposium and the Institute for Black Catholic Studies.

After Sr. Jamie completed her doctoral degree, she taught at, and eventually assumed the Directorship, of the IBCS, having been personally invited to do so by President Norman Francis, the brother of Bishop Joseph Francis who recommended her for the position.

*Reconvening the BCTS*

After the first two meetings of the BCTS, the organization entered a hiatus that lasted a decade. The initial organizers, Thaddeus Posey O.F.M. Cap., and Cyprian Davis, O.S.B., found that they were pulled in so many different directions with their leadership and scholarship that they weren't able to continue convening the BCTS. Sr. Jamie, who had just completed her dissertation in 1989, and then-Sr. Shawn Copeland, O.P.,<sup>15</sup> who completed hers in 1991, set out to re-invigorate the group. Together, they re-convened the BCTS.

I kept trying to say to Thaddeus and Cyprian, we need to start the BCTS up again, we need to pull the scholars together because we need an audience that understands our context, we need to be helping each other in our scholarship and we need to help those doctoral students to encourage them.

And they were just so busy and couldn't put more and more things on their plates, and that's about two to three years of me begging them to start it up again. I just said, "Okay, forget it I'll start it up again." And so that's how it got restarted. I served as the convener for like 10 years. I wanted it to be shorter than that, but I couldn't pawn it off to anybody! The year I resigned, it was like, "Lock the door, we're not leaving until we have our new president and a whole slate," and I absolutely didn't want to do it anymore.

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<sup>15</sup> Dr. Copeland left the Dominicans in 1994.



1978 BCTS Group Photo (middle row, Sr. Jamie Phelps circled)<sup>16</sup> Photo printed with permission of NBCCC.



Sr. Jamie at BCTS, 1978.  
Photo printed with permission of NBCCC.

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<sup>16</sup> Thaddeus J. Posey, O.F.M. Cap. (editor). "Participants," *Theology: A Portrait in Black* (Philadelphia: The Capuchin Pres, 1980).



After ten years of leadership, Sr. Jamie felt it was important that the organization have new leadership and new vision. Making space for new ideas, new directions, and new leadership styles helps ensure the longevity of the organization.

My whole purpose is I don't ever think an institution should belong to an individual. You can start, it would grow, but when a *community* owns it, you can ensure its longevity. Nothing should be so dependent on one person that if that person dies it falls apart, and so that's my whole approach. Some of that comes out of my MSW and community organization training, and I really am committed to that. You need fresh ideas to keep an institution or a movement vibrant.

#### *Work as a teacher/scholar*

We asked Sr. Jamie to reflect on her work as a professor - her teaching, scholarship, and ministry. She described the work she did for the IBCS and at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago:

Besides working with the IBCS, when I became a professor at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, they approached me and asked me to do something incorporating my work in Black spirituality. I said to them, I'll would do something with Black Spirituality, but I want to decide how to do it. I needed my work to be considered mainstream. If I had been teaching only Black courses, they wouldn't recognize me as a legitimate systematic theologian, so I said to the hiring faculty that I needed to teach the same courses that the other systematians taught, which was courses on God, Christ, Church, Eschatology. I wasn't interested in teaching Eschatology, I just wanted to teach God, Christ, and Church. So when I went to CTU, for the first three or four years I taught the major courses: God, Christ, and Church. By around year three or four I also incorporated some Black courses, so I introduced a course on Black Catholic Theology. And then, since you can't do Catholic theology without doing spirituality, so I introduced a course on Black Spirituality.

Sr. Jamie eventually earned the rank of tenured full professor of Theology at Catholic Theological Union. During her time there, she had the privilege of teaching a wide and diverse group of priests, women religious, and laity, preparing them for ministry to racially and culturally diverse congregations. Many of her students ended up serving in leadership roles in parishes and diocesan offices in the USA and in other nations as well.

One of the goals of CTU was to encourage more Black students to enroll in their programs. Sr. Jamie recommended they develop the Augustus Tolton program,<sup>17</sup> which she helped design and run.

I named the program after Augustus Tolton, the first Black priest to practice in the Chicago area. We provided scholarships for the students. I wanted them to have the broad theological program, so they follow the regular curriculum at CTU but in addition they are expected to take the courses that are specifically Black. They also participate in a formation program. But you know what, in order to be a minister, it's not simply the head knowledge, it is also who you are as a person. So during formation we look at who they are psychologically, we listen to what's going on in their lives, how they have to balance their life with their regular work role. ... All the Black scholars at CTU are full-time employed people, but the student are not full-time students so we listen to their problems and we help them develop their curriculum. We advise them on what course to take and we help them in their spiritual and psychological development.

Throughout her career, Sr. Jamie has remained focused on ministry to and by members of underrepresented and underserved populations.

I taught Systematic Theology at CTU, Xavier University, Loyola University in Chicago and other Catholic graduate schools. Several of my courses on Church and Church Mission included documentation of the USA Catholic ministry among Blacks, Asians, Native Americans, and Latino/a Americans.

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<sup>17</sup> Catholic Theological Union, "Augustus Tolton Scholarship Program," accessed August 29, 2021, <https://ctu.edu/initiatives/tolton-program-2/>.

*Closing remarks*

Sr. Jamie asked us if she might make some closing remarks about her life, her work, and her networks of support:

Life has been fun for me. With all the stuff that I've done I've always had an inner sense of joy, and God has always provided me with enough human support. I'm an extrovert, so I cannot live a life isolated, but I've learned as I've aged that I don't have to have a crowd. God has put in my life one or two close friends that share, that I can share what's going on with me in addition to my spiritual director, my spiritual confidants. I have one or two friends that know who I am, know what's happening in my life. We have in my congregation mission groups that meet once a month or once a quarter. When we go to these missions, 10 or 12 Adrians get together in groups and we share with them what's been going on in our life, what problems we're facing, and everybody prays about it.

So I have both my religious support group and I have two people, one is a laywoman, Pearl, and the other one is Mother General of the Sisters of the Holy Family. So they are my current confidants that know what's going on in my life and keep track of me. Pearl makes sure I live a balanced life by making me go to movies and things like that. Not making me but making me make time to do ordinary things because all work and no play makes you a dull, unbalanced person.

Sr. Jamie's story is one of hope, inspiration, and dedication. From her baptism by a Black Josephite priest, her early call to service and ministry, her changing gender consciousness, to her leadership in the BCTS and IBCS, her narrative helps us understand how persistence, tenacity, and the wisdom and strength of forming networks of support can help us navigate even the most stubborn obstacles. Her life's work has moved us forward over the decades in serving the Black Catholic community and beyond.

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