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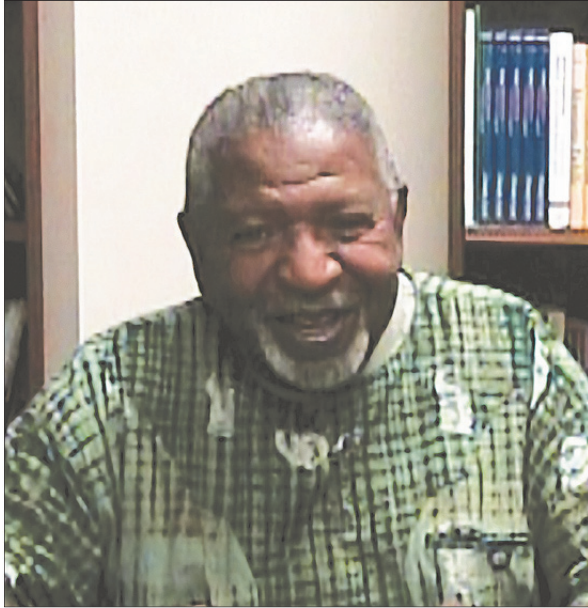
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**Memorial for Father Charles E. Payne, O.F.M., Ph.D.
March 29, 1939 – March 29, 2017**



Father Charles E. Payne both entered and departed the universe on March 29 with 78 years intervening. Born to Mr. Elbert Holden and Ms. Wilmoth Wilson Payne in Paris, Tennessee on March 29, 1939, Father Payne was only five years old when he joined his family on a Great Migration journey from Tennessee to Detroit, Michigan. The eldest of five siblings, Father Payne grew up attending Detroit public schools and the Baptist church, which meant so much to his mother and to him, too. During summers, Father Payne and his siblings would return to Tennessee to spend time with the family members who had remained there. It was on the train trips from Detroit to Paris that he got the Jim Crow experience right after the train disembarked from Cincinnati and headed across the river to Kentucky. That was when he and his siblings had to move to the colored car. Unlike the comfortable upholstered seats they had occupied from Detroit down to Cincinnati, they crossed over into Kentucky in wicker seats that softened none of the bumps, rattles or turns. So much for separate but equal. Though he said he did

not really analyze what that all meant at the time, it was a memory that stayed with him and that he chose to share in 2010 when he gave an interview for the Black Catholic Theological Symposium Oral History Project. We also learned at that time that high school was a pivotal time in his life.

While a student attending Cass Technical High School, a college prep school for students interested in the sciences and engineering, he decided that he would pursue a career in computers and get his start by serving in the United States Army. Believing that college was beyond his family's financial means, he chose to enter the Army because it would help him achieve his academic goals and it would also give him the chance see what lay beyond Detroit. It was also during high school, that Father Payne undertook a religious quest that introduced him to the Roman Catholic faith which he would claim as his own as a young man. He entered the Catholic Church in 1960.

Life in the military took Father Payne back to Tennessee, out west to Oklahoma, and abroad to Germany. While stationed in Germany, he travelled around Europe, and Rome was one of his destinations. He also went to the Holy Land while in service. His time in the Army made him know that the world was a much wider place than his childhood experiences revealed. Of this time in his life, Father Payne said "I was changed." Part of his change was realizing that he had a call to religious life and to the priesthood. He entered the Franciscan Order in 1965, took his solemn vows in 1969, and was ordained to the priesthood in 1972 at St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Chicago.

Though he would never give up his love for science in general and for computers in particular, he did find that he wanted to pursue of field that would allow him to directly help people with the things in life that they struggled with the most. Psychology seemed to be the answer. Father Payne earned his Ph.D. in psychology at Northwestern University in 1989.

Father Payne served in many, many roles over the decades, but principally he was a teacher, a therapist, and a priest. He served in Cleveland, Ohio and Chicago. Among his posts were the Osteopathic Hospital, Hales Franciscan High School, Xavier University of Louisiana's Institute for Black Catholic Studies, the Catholic Theological Union, and Midwestern University.

When the sad news of Father Payne's death was shared on the BCTS list serve on March 29, 2017, members began to share their sorrow about his passing and their thanksgiving for his life. Among the qualities that people remembered most fondly were his zest for life, his love of jokes and joking, his sense of adventure, his love of movies, his joy in wandering, and his true concern for people and their well-being. Sr. LaReine-Marie Mosely recalled being his student at the Institute for Black Catholic Studies and how important his course on Black Psychology was to her own thinking about racial identity, relationships, and "searching for meaning in our community." She was thankful for times when she got to see Father Payne when she was living and working in Chicago. To her those were occasions of joy. In him she found a model for a healthy approach to life. She thought he would never die but go on and on like "the Energizer Bunny."

Similarly, Shawnee M. Daniels-Sykes found Father Payne to be someone who "was always interested in participating in life." He was a good listener who gave that gift of attention to all. His undivided attention was especially appreciated at the meetings of the BCTS because for so many members that time together each October is the time of year when many of us feel most heard in the course of the year. If Father Payne was in attendance you could count on receiving his rapt attention, an insightful and constructive comment, a word of encouragement, and also a book or film suggestion that might help you move forward with your research.

A psychologist by training, Father Payne gave unstintingly to so many people over the years who needed counseling. He felt especially called to minister in hospitals where people seemed to be in the most need physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. And, people were grateful that this was his call. He surrendered judgement so to make whoever was confiding in him secure. One member shared that she often sought counsel from Father Payne during challenging times. In trusting him, she gained from his "insightful wisdom" and experienced a sense of security knowing "whatever I shared" was held in "utter confidence."

Sr. Jamie T. Phelps, O.P., Kathleen Dorsey Bellow, and M. Shawn Copeland, who all worked with Father Payne at the Institute for Black Catholic Studies, recalled him as an excellent teacher, as an intellectual who was humble, as one who gave generously to the IBCS and the

BCTS, and as one who was always willing to share his gifts with the community.

Beyond being a gifted psychologist and professor, Father Payne was a friend to so many. He loved being with people and they loved being with him, too. C. Vanessa White fondly remembered tricks that Father Payne played on her, and Sr. Jamie, who knew Father Payne “back in the day,” recalled dinners she hosted at her South Shore apartment for the Black priests and sisters in the area. There they shared life experiences, prayers, and good food.

Father Payne was the rare person. He was a true “free spirit” but he was also deeply relational. When he was with you, he really was with you. Of course, he is missed. But, in so many ways his presence with us is still strong. And, as Shawn Copeland shared in her reflections on him and his death, we who are still here have the hope that one day Father Charles Payne will “hold ‘de door’ for us “as Thea and Bede and Nathan and Eva Regina and Cyprian have held the door for him.”

The members to the Black Catholic Theological Symposium give thanks for the remarkable life and ministry of our brother, Father Charles E. Payne, O.F.M., Ph.D.