BLACK CATHOLIC HISTORY

Sister Thea Bowman
Did you know that a little Methodist girl born, Bertha Bowman, in Yazoo City, Mississippi, grew up to be a renowned Roman Catholic nun, teacher and scholar?

Sr. Thea Bowman became Catholic when she was nine years old. She later went to college and then became the first African American to join the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in Wisconsin. After 16 years of teaching at the elementary, secondary and college levels, Sr. Thea Bowman was invited to be a special consultant for the Catholic Church. She gave presentations around the country aimed at bridging racial and cultural divisions. She combined her gifts of singing and gospel preaching, with prayers and storytelling. Sr. Thea Bowman was diagnosed with bone cancer in 1984. Yet, she continued her fight against the evils that drive people apart, from her wheelchair, until her death at age 53 in 1990. Sr. Thea Bowman said she prayed “to live until I die – to live fully.” And that she did.

St. Katherine Drexel
Did you know that a canonized saint who described herself as “The mother and servant of the Indian and Negro races” helped finance the first Black Catholic College in the United States?

In 1858, St. Katherine Drexel was born into great wealth in Philadelphia, PA. As she grew up, St. Katherine’s parents taught her that their money was meant to be shared with others. St. Katherine took this to the heart throughout her long life, especially in service to suffering Native and African Americans. She gave more than 21 million dollars of her own money to help found dozens of churches, schools, and hospitals across the United States. Besides founding her own religious congregation of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, St. Katherine also established Xavier University in New Orleans, La. It’s the only Catholic African American College in the country. St. Katherine Drexel died in 1955 and became a saint in the year 2000.

Sources:
-Archdiocese of Detroit website: https://info.aod.org/articles/black-saints-and-notable-figures
Archdiocese of Chicago website: https://bci.archchicago.org/resources/black-catholic-saints