

**AN HOUR WITH
MOTHER HENRIETTE
DELILLE**

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Liguori

Imprimi Potest:
Stephen T. Rehrauer, CSsR, Provincial
Denver Province, The Redemptorists

ISBN 978-0-7648-2829-4

Published by Liguori Publications, Liguori, Missouri 63057

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Printed in the United States of America

24 23 22 21 20 / 5 4 3 2 1

First Edition

Opening Prayer with Mother Henriette Delille

Almighty and ever-loving God, you lifted up Henriette Delille, a descendant of enslaved people in New Orleans, to bear witness of your love to the enslaved and free, the immigrant, the sick, the orphan, the aged, the instructed, and the uneducated. Grant that through the intercession of Venerable Henriette Delille our world will be more just, loving, and free from all that divides your creation.

Your Holy Spirit inspired Henriette to declare, "I believe in God. I hope in God. I love. I want to live and die for God." This manifestation was so intense that she was moved to mark it by writing those words in the flyleaf of her prayer book.

Loving God, as I reflect more on her prayer, my desire is to emulate her and consecrate my whole being to You. Many are the times, like

Jesus, that Henriette suffered the anguish of the cross; however, she persevered to reach her destiny. You rewarded her by calling other women of African descent to follow her example of holiness and to inspire them to give themselves completely to You.

May your Son, Jesus Christ, our Brother, continue to use Mother Henriette to bring justice to our broken and chaotic world. We pray, Almighty God, that through your Church, she may be raised to the altar of sainthood. Amen.

The Spiritual Biography of Mother Henriette Delille

Fervent faith led this woman of African descent to overcome severe loss and heartache and to found a community of sisters to serve those who needed help most.

By the spring of 1988, the General Superior of the Sisters of the Holy Family believed the time had finally come for her to make an unusual, highly worthy request of the archbishop of New Orleans. Mother Rose de Lourdes Hazeur asked to meet with Archbishop Philip Hannan so she could prod the prelate to consider opening a cause for canonization of the community's founder, Henriette Delille. When Archbishop Hannan asked Mother Rose what had taken her so long, the wise leader explained that the sisters had always thought of Henriette as a saint but the racist attitudes of the times had prevented them from making the request. Henriette was

not just any woman. She, like all of the Sisters of the Holy Family, was a woman of color and a descendant of slaves.

Archbishop Hannan quickly wrote to the Vatican's Congregation for the Causes of Saints, seeking authorization to begin the process for Mother Henriette's canonization. In his letter, the archbishop noted that since the order's founding on November 21, 1842, the Holy Family Sisters had been a "vital part of the Church in this archdiocese," a source of "inspiration and evangelization, especially among the black people in this area, and wherever they have worked and taught." He added, "All who knew about Henriette's life and achievements knew she possessed the holiness of life and the heroic virtues of a saint of God."

The committee for saints agreed. A historical commission was formed, and her cause was officially opened in 1988.

Born in New Orleans in 1812, Henriette Delille understood her life within the context of both slavery and freedom. Her great-great-grandmother, named Marie Anne by her