

African American Catholic Spirituality and Chattanooga's St. Francis Church

presented by

Christopher Gurley Jr., M.T.S.

Friday, July 19, 2019 at 6:00 pm

The Basilica of Sts. Peter and Paul

Celebrating the diversity of the Catholic Church, we must also recognize the complex realities of the lives of its members. Over the past few months, Vanderbilt Alumni and current Yale student and parishioner, **Christopher Gurley**, has been researching the **faith community of Saint Francis**: the only black Roman Catholic mission church in East Tennessee, once located in Chattanooga. As he mapped the historical developments of the proud and beautiful faith community, he came to better understand the complex role of Catholicism in America—The Historical, Theological, and Pastoral journey of the American Catholic Church. From this three-fold position, Chris will discuss our future in evangelizing and in standing in solidarity with every community in Chattanooga.

Historical – We will address the complex role of Catholicism in the narrative of American life and the developing dynamics of race in America—as exemplified in the community of the old Saint Francis Church.

Theological – We will discuss the tenets of African American Catholic spirituality and its gift to the entire Church.

Pastoral – We will discuss what Catholicism can and must do for the betterment of our city and our world.

All members of the Chattanooga community who are interested in this history and what it means for us today, please join us for this enlightening talk and slideshow.

Refreshments will be served.



Mr. Christopher Gurley Jr. is a Catholic convert, native Chattanooga and parishioner of the Basilica of Sts. Peter and Paul. After graduating Summa Cum Laude from Tennessee State University, he continued his studies at Vanderbilt University Divinity School—becoming The first African-American recipient of the Roman Catholics Scholarship at Vanderbilt. His studies concentrate on the intersections of race constructions, class dynamics, and Catholic history and theology. This fall he will continue his studies at Yale University where he will pursue his Master of Arts degree in Religion en route to his PhD and JD.

