



**It took 89 years past our country's Independence Day before all enslaved African-Americans were free.** June 19, 1865, also known as *National Freedom Day*, is considered the official end of slavery in the United States. Enslaved people in Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas were not told about their freedom until this day, even though other Southern states had known since April 1863.

Texans started the first family and community celebrations to honor their freedom on June 19th, 1866. The day of activities was known as Jubilee Day, and the day was started with the reading of the Emancipation Proclamation. Jubilee day eventually became known as JUNETEENTH, shorthand for the month and day that enslaved Texans were notified of their freedom in 1865.

The holiday is still observed in African-American communities throughout the country with prayers, family gatherings, rallies, concerts, galas, book readings, and awareness fairs! Juneteenth is now recognized as a federal holiday after President Joe Biden signed legislation in 2021 making it so. We invite everyone in the Bon Secours family to pray, learn, and get involved in Juneteenth celebrations this year.

### **For your meditation and reflection...**

We invite you to take some time in reflection on this important holiday. One way is to read the poem below and then explore the questions and what they mean for you today.

### *A Commemoration*

**Today, we commemorate the end of slavery in America. This day partially reminds us of the progress made. This day also partially reminds us of the progress we have not made.**

**We celebrate the freedom of black lives in our nation. We grieve that we have not correctly reconciled racism in our nation. You created each person in Your image.**

**The two greatest commandments call us to love You with all our heart, souls, and minds; Then, to love our neighbor as ourselves. Your love for us motivates us to love each other. If we do not love each other, then ultimately, we have not experienced Your love.**

**As much as we commemorate and celebrate Juneteenth, we grieve this day. We mourn that our black brothers and sisters have not been loved as our neighbors. We mourn that our black brothers and sisters have been treated less than created in Your image throughout history. So, Lord, we confess our sins and repent. The healing and reconciliation we desire comes from the gospel.**

**On Juneteenth this year, we ask You to guide our nation. May the good news of the gospel motivate us to love each other. May the ideals of our words match the practices of our lives. May a fresh empowerment of Your Spirit unite us together. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear Your will and leading.**

- Peter Englert  
(Source: [www.xavier.edu](http://www.xavier.edu))

### **Reflection:**

- What words or themes struck you...resonated with/for you?
- As you read this reflection, what, if anything, grieves you?
- How is the Holy Spirit leading you in the work of social justice?



### **Learn more about Juneteenth**

Here are two videos where you can learn more:

- ◆ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lq8TNKZVEWs>
- ◆ <https://www.magnetmediafilms.com/story/19-ways-to-celebrate-juneteenth>

Here are some resources to learn more about Juneteenth:

1. [National Museum of African American History and Culture's online Juneteenth exhibit](#)
2. [The History Channel's page on Juneteenth](#)
3. [The New York Times' article on the history of Juneteenth](#)
4. [PBS' documentary "Juneteenth Jamboree"](#)
5. [The book "On Juneteenth" by Annette Gordon-Reed](#)

## Local Celebrations

### **Bon Secours Retreat and Conference Center Juneteenth Celebration Retreat**

<https://bonsecoursrcc.org/event/juneteenth-celebration-retreat/>

### **The Archdiocese of Washington Juneteenth Mass**

<https://adw.org/event/juneteenth/>

### **The Archdiocese of Baltimore**

Jun 20, 2024 – Juneteenth, 7-8 pm (TBD) (with Archbishop Lori)

Contact [Black Catholic Ministries](#) for more information

### **The Diocese of Charleston South Carolina Juneteenth the Truth event**

<https://charlestdiocese.org/event/juneteenth-the-truth/>

