

WHAT  
HAPPENED

Pope  
Benedict XVI  
declared  
Henriette DeLille  
Venerable on  
March 27, 2010.

## Henriette DeLille may not yet be canonized by the Catholic Church, but she undoubtedly was saint-like to the people of color who she helped house, educate and comfort.

DeLille was a free woman of color. Although her family had a comfortable life and could pass for white, Deville identified as nonwhite.

She began preaching to slaves and nonwhites and privately pledged herself to God's service in 1836. In 1842, DeLille, Juliette Gaudin and Josephine Charles founded the Sisters of the Holy Family at St. Augustine in the Tremé. Because they identified as nonwhite, they could not join other holy orders that were open only to white women.

They pledged to devote themselves to educating young girls of color and caring for the aged and the poor.

The order opened schools and nursing homes for nonwhites, and a Catholic home for the elderly, the Lafon Nursing facility.

When DeLille died in 1862, there

were 12 members of the order, but it continued to grow. The order reached its peak in 1950, with 400 sisters.

Today there are fewer than 100 nuns serving the order, which is based in Gentilly.

"What Henriette DeLille did in her time could be compared to what Mother Theresa did in hers," Sister Angela Merici Luis, of the Sisters of the Holy Family in Compton, California, told the Los Angeles Times in 1999.

In 1988, the order formally opened the cause with the Holy See for the canonization of DeLille. In 2010, Pope Benedict XVI declared DeLille to be Venerable, or heroic in virtue. The Vatican is investigating two miracles attributed to DeLille. If the miracles are confirmed, DeLille could become the first saint from New Orleans.



The Sisters of the Holy Family continued to grow after DeLille's death in 1862.



Haitian-born artist Ulrick Jean-Pierre's portrait of DeLille, which hangs at the Gentilly motherhouse, represents the sisters' ministries to the sick, the old, and youth needing schooling.



Two stained glass windows depicting Henriette DeLille, and a prayer room honoring her, were added to St. Louis Cathedral in 2008.