

Pierre Toussaint

HAIRDRESSER • PHILANTHROPIST • INSPIRATION

JUNE 27, 1766 - JUNE 30, 1853

Venerable Pierre Toussaint was born enslaved in what is now Haiti. His enslaver had Pierre serve in the house and allowed Pierre to learn to read and write. During the unrest of the Haitian Revolution, Pierre, his sister, and several other enslaved people were brought to safety in New York by their enslavers. There Pierre trained as a hairdresser and was finally freed in 1807. He soon married, and together the couple ran several successful businesses, using their wealth to serve the poor of New York City, no matter their race.



Did you know?

Pierre was well known for his abilities as a hairdresser and his gift of deep listening and spiritual advice while doing hair. He was always ready to listen but refused to partake in gossip!

When St. Elizabeth Ann Seton needed funds to begin an orphanage in 1817, Pierre gave generously, even though they would only take White children!

For over 60 years Pierre went to daily Mass on Barclay Street.

Pierre supported many major Catholic projects in the city, including the building of the old St. Patrick's Cathedral and the city's first Black Catholic School.

In 1991, Cardinal O'Connor began the official process for his beatification and had Toussaint's body reinterred in St. Patrick's Cathedral. He became the first layman buried in the crypt below the altar.

Sources:

<https://blackandindianmission.org/venerable-pierre-toussaint>

<https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/venerable-pierre-toussaint/>

<https://www.nationalshrine.org/blog/a-hairdresser-for-christ-the-extraordinary-life-of-pierre-toussaint/>