



February 24, 2026

Dear Friends,

This year marks major milestones in the celebration of Black History Month — one hundred years since historian Carter G. Woodson first launched the effort to celebrate and preserve African American history and 50 years since its observance was recognized at the federal level.

Our role in higher education calls us to reflect on the hard truths of our past and to recognize that the Black experience has been marked by an ongoing struggle for freedom and justice. As a Catholic, Jesuit institution, we can also reflect on this in light of our mission. As Pope Francis wrote in his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*: “Nowadays, it is easy to be tempted to turn the page, to say that all these things happened long ago and we should look to the future. For God’s sake, no! We can never move forward without remembering the past; we do not progress without an honest and unclouded memory.”

Black History Month calls us to such work, to educate about our history and to take seriously our charge to inspire and advance a more hopeful future.

I’d like to take a moment to commend the University students, faculty, staff, organizations and community partners who have celebrated Black History Month with engaging programs and activities, both on and off campus.

The University hosted a discussion and trivia night, “Contributions of Black Northeast Pennsylvanians Across the Eras: From the Underground Railroad to Black Scranton,” in partnership with the Black Scranton Project and Destination Freedom at the Waverly Community House.

Members of the University’s Louis Stanley Brown Black Student Union were interviewed for a forthcoming WBRE-TV segment about the BSU’s events and involvement on campus.

Our University’s Arrupe Award, on Feb. 17, honored this year’s recipient, M. Shawn Copeland, whose contributions to Black Catholic theology have been immeasurable and whose campus talk challenged us to do our part to contribute to compassionate solidarity.

These are but a few examples. As we walk together through this Black History Month, may we recommit ourselves to the work of fostering equality and shaping a more just world. In

the spirit of the beautiful prayer uttered by Jesus in John's gospel, let us pray "that all may be one, as You and I are one, and that they may be one in us" (17:21).

Yours faithfully,

Joseph G. Marina, S.J.
President