

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

**Civil Rights Leader and Martyr,
1929-1968**

Feast Day: April 4 or January 15



Collect: Almighty God, by the hand of Moses your servant you led your people out of slavery, and made them free at last: Grant that your Church, following the example of your prophet Martin Luther King, Jr., may resist oppression in the name of your love, and may secure for all your children the blessed liberty of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Facts:

- Ph.D. from Boston University, ordained Baptist pastor
- Led the Montgomery bus boycott and immediately rose to national prominence
- Founded Southern Christian Leadership Conference to spearhead non-violent mass demonstrations against racism
- His campaigns were central to the passage of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964, 1965, and 1968
- Realized that poverty, militarism and racism were deeply interrelated, and began to openly oppose the Vietnam War
- His home was bombed, he was nearly fatally stabbed, received death threats from white supremacist groups constantly
- The FBI placed him under surveillance in an effort to discredit him
- God spoke to him in a vision in 1957: "Martin Luther, stand up for righteousness, stand up for justice."
- Most famous speeches/sermons include "I Have a Dream" (1963) and "The Promised Land" (1968)
- Assassinated on April 4, 1968, shot by James Earl Ray

Spiritual/Theological Teachings and Legacy

- Social change must be pursued by means both ethical and effective: non-violent resistance and civil disobedience meet that criteria
- Poverty, war and racism are intimately interrelated
- We must attempt to work with anyone and everyone—including enemies/oppressors—to build bridges toward change (in contrast to Malcolm X's approach)
- “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.”
- The themes of liberation, exodus and deliverance are central to the Bible and to God's work in the world

Questions Raised by Life & Work

- What is the relationship of the believer with the state?
- What is the believer's responsibility to work for justice? How is that best lived out?
- What is the moral responsibility of the richest and most powerful in society?
- What does it mean to give one's life for justice?
- What is God's relationship to the oppressed? To the oppressor?
- Where am I oppressed? Where am I an oppressor?
- How I am called to work against racism? For peace? For justice?

My notes/observations/questions/prayer topics:

JONATHAN DANIELS

Seminarian & Martyr, 1939-1965

Feast Day: August 14

Collect: O God of justice and compassion, you put down the proud and mighty from their place, and lift up the poor and the afflicted: We give you thanks for your faithful witness Jonathan Myrick Daniels, who, in the midst of injustice and violence, risked and gave his life for another; and we pray that we, following his example, may make no peace with oppression; through Jesus Christ the Just, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.



Facts:

- Had a profound conversion experience at Easter in 1962 that solidified his priestly vocation
- Began seminary at Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge, Mass.
- MLK in March 1965, asked people to come to Selma to help
- Daniels saw the Episcopal Church both as an agent of a racist society but also the hope for its eventual conversion and change
- Took a leave of absence from seminary and go work in Selma
- Jailed on August 14, 1965 for joining a picket line
- He and his companions were released, and walked to a corner store, aware that they were in danger
- As 16-year-old Ruby Sales reached the top step of the entrance, a man with a shotgun approached, shouting obscenities
- Jonathan pulled her to one side and shielded her with his body, and as a result was killed by a blast from the 12-gauge gun
- Ruby Sales went on to attend ETS in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the same seminary as Jonathan

Spiritual/Theological Teachings & Legacy

- Quote from Daniels on his experience in Selma: “The doctrine of the creeds, the enacted faith of the sacraments, were the essential preconditions of the experience itself. The faith with which I went to Selma has not changed: it has grown...I began to know in my bones and sinews that I had been truly baptized into the Lord’s death and resurrection...with them, the black men and white men, with all life, in him whose Name is above all the names that the races and nations shout...We are indelibly and unspeakably one.”
- Justice work can come directly out of our own spiritual experiences and revelations
- Career and reputation must take a back seat to conscience
- Concrete action in the cause of justice matters

Questions Raised by Life & Work

- “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.” What do you make of this in light of Jonathan’s story?
- What is the relationship of the doctrine and creeds of the Church to your call to enact justice? How does the Tradition call you to new work?
- What are you willing to give up for social change? What are you not willing to give up?
- Is there more than one way to be a martyr? Few of us are going to go out in a blaze of glory like Daniels, so what is martyrdom for us?
- How do we prevent self-sacrifice from becoming a source of toxic pride?

My notes/observations/questions/prayer topics:

THE PHILADELPHIA ELEVEN

First Eleven Women Ordained in the Episcopal Church, 1974

Feast Day: none (unofficial: July 29)



Collect: (unofficial) For the Church:
Gracious Father, we pray for thy holy catholic Church. Fill it with all truth, in all truth with all peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it; where it is in error, direct it; where in any thing it is amiss, reform it. Where it is right, strengthen it; where it is in want, provide for it; where it is divided, reunite it; for the sake of Jesus Christ thy Son our Savior. Amen.

Facts:

- The first eleven women ordained as priests in the Episcopal Church on July 29, 1974, two years before General Convention authorized the ordination of women to the priesthood
- No canon law existed prohibiting the ordination of women as deacons, priests and bishops. However, the custom of ordaining only men was the norm
- As soon as women were seated as lay deputies at General Convention, the women's ordination coalition put forth resolutions calling for women deacons, priests, and bishops
- Resolutions failed in 1970 and 1973, the coalition decided to move forward without the sanction of the Convention provided they could find bishops willing to ordain them
- Three bishops agreed. The service was July 29, 1974. There were protestors, including priests who read statements of dissent at the "speak now or forever hold your peace moment," but the ordinations went forward
- House of Bishops declared the ordinations "irregular" and the women were not supposed to celebrate Eucharist, but many did anyway

- Final approval from Convention came in 1976

Spiritual/Theological Teachings & Legacy

- Sometimes progress must be jump-started in the church, and this can result in both progress and profound division in the church
- The role of the priest as a representative of Christ at the Eucharist is first divorced from gender, leads to more questions around God and gender
- There are always more people gifted to do God's work in the world than the institution is willing to recognize and lift up
- A further division from the Roman Catholic Church, simultaneously closer ties with Protestant churches

Questions Raised by Life & Work

- When is okay to break church rules to get something done?
- What does conscience-driven rebellion look like? What are its benefits? What are its costs?
- What is the value of unity in church? What is the value of diversity? How can the two coexist?
- How do we recognize gifts for ministry among us? Who is being ignored now?

My notes/observations/questions/prayer topics:

GENE ROBINSON

First Openly Gay Bishop in the Episcopal Church, 2003

Feast Day: none, (unofficial: November 2)



Collect: (unofficial) For the Clergy and People: Almighty and everlasting God, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift: Send down upon our bishops, and other clergy, and upon the congregations committed to their charge, the healthful Spirit of thy grace: and, that they may truly please thee, pour upon them the continual dew of thy blessing. Grant this, O Lord, for the honor of our Advocate and Mediator, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Facts:

- Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of New Hampshire
- Elected Bishop by the Diocese in 2003, and a firestorm over clergy sexuality erupted all over the church

Following his election, conservatives in the national church stated that allowing his consecration to go forward could spark a schism in the American Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion

- Received so many death threats that he was required to wear a bullet-proof vest at his consecration
- Some conservative churches broke away from the Episcopal Church and formed the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA), aligned with bishops outside the U.S.
- Some factions in the Anglican Communion, particularly in Africa and other places in the Global South, wanted ECUSA thrown out of the Anglican Communion
- This prompted the writing of the Windsor Report which recommended ECUSA conform to a written doctrinal covenant, which we declined to do
- Robinson was not invited by Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams to the once-a-decade worldwide gathering of Anglican Bishops at Lambeth in 2008

Spiritual/Theological Teachings & Legacy

- Sexual orientation is inherent at our creation, and we are blessed by God in our sexuality
- Our ability to serve in the church is not determined by gender or sexuality
- Sometimes it takes a figurehead to spearhead a change in the church, and that can be a lonely and thankless role
- His consecration paved the way for discussion of same-sex marriage in the Episcopal Church (authorized by General Convention in 2012, which it was hosted by Indianapolis)

Questions Raised by Life & Work

- What are the components of a mature, compassionate, and bounded Christian sexual ethic outside of old patriarchal models?
- How do we decide both as individuals and corporately what to discard from Tradition and what to retain?
- What is our scriptural hermeneutic? How do we choose which texts in the Bible to live by, and which ones reflect the limits of the culture in which they were written?
- What does the church lose in schism? What does it gain?
- What creates the Anglican Communion? What binds us together? What is the value of worldwide communion? What are its limitations?

My notes/observations/questions/prayer topics: