

Readings for Thursday, February 12, 2026

[The Consecration of Barbara Clementine Harris] *First Woman Bishop in the Anglican Communion, 1989*

Psalm 33:18-22

- 18 Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon those who fear him, *
on those who wait upon his love,
- 19 To pluck their lives from death, *
and to feed them in time of famine.
- 20 Our soul waits for the LORD; *
he is our help and our shield.
- 21 Indeed, our heart rejoices in him, *
for in his holy Name we put our trust.
- 22 Let your loving-kindness, O LORD, be upon us, *
as we have put our trust in you.

Isaiah 58:6-12

Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?
Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator shall go before you,
the glory of the Lord shall be your rearguard.
Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,
if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.
The Lord will guide you continually,
and satisfy your needs in parched places,
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters never fail.
Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to live in.

Luke 18:1-8

Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. He said, 'In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, "Grant me justice against my opponent." For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, "Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.'" And the Lord said, 'Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?'

Collect:

God of the prophets, we give you thanks for calling Barbara Clementine Harris to the office of bishop. Open our eyes to behold the wondrous works you have prepared for your church in calling women to share in the ministry of the episcopate. May we, inspired by their example as faithful shepherds, wise teachers, courageous prophets, and guardians of the faith, proclaim the Good News and carry out the works of Jesus Christ in the world; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns for ever and ever. ***Amen.***

[The Consecration of Barbara Clementine Harris]

First Woman Bishop in the Anglican Communion, 1989

Barbara Clementine Harris was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on June 12, 1930. She was active in the civil rights struggles of the 1960s and continued as a powerful advocate for the civil enfranchisement of all people in the United States. Ordained as a priest in 1980, her ministry was in both the parish and the public square. She continued to address issues of civil injustice while also offering a prophetic critique of the Episcopal Church for its homophobia, racism, and sexism.

Although General Convention included the provision for electing and consecrating women to be bishops in 1976, no woman became a bishop until Barbara Harris was elected as bishop suffragan for the Diocese of Massachusetts on September 24, 1988. Her election and subsequent consecration were not without controversy, including threats on her life by those opposed to the inclusion of women in the House of Bishops. Despite these threats, she was consecrated bishop on February 11, 1989. Sixty bishops served as co-consecrators before a congregation of eight thousand people.

As a bishop, Harris shaped a generation of leaders through her powerful preaching as chief pastor at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul in Boston; her witnessing, preaching, and teaching in the Diocese of Massachusetts and beyond; her advocacy for, in her words, “the least, the last, and the lost”; and her joy in sharing her faith, especially through hymns. She said of her work as a bishop, “I certainly don’t want to be one of the boys. I want to offer my peculiar gifts as a black woman . . . a sensitivity and an awareness that comes out of more than a passing acquaintance with oppression.”

Bishop Harris served the people of the Diocese of Massachusetts as their suffragan bishop for thirteen years, until her retirement in 2002. After her retirement, she served from 2003 to 2007 as an assisting bishop in the Diocese of Washington, D.C. and she continued to be in demand worldwide as a preacher until the end of her life.

The first woman ordained as a bishop in the Episcopal Church and the worldwide Anglican Communion, Barbara Harris has been joined by more than fifty women in the episcopate. She died on March 13, 2020.