

The Litany

Selma to Montgomery; the Voting Rights Act; Brown Chapel; and 50 Years

Leader: Fifty years ago, Leaders and Foot Soldiers of the Civil Rights Movement said, “Let us go to Brown Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church; the march to Voting Rights will begin from within its historic and sacred walls.” The voices of reason, encouragement and inspiration would reverberate from wall to wall, oration from the mouths of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Minister Malcolm X, Pastor P. H. Lewis, Bishop Isaiah Hamilton Bonner, and other prophetic voices.

People: **Like the Exodus, from Egypt to the Promised Land, the March to Freedom begins with worship; and so it was from Selma to Montgomery. Therefore, let us worship!**

Leader: March 7, 1965 was a First Sunday. The Brown Chapel congregation would have knelt at the Chancel Rail to receive the blessed sacrament of Holy Communion, remembering that Christ died for the remission of sin. The sacred text reminds us that “without the shedding of blood there is no remission.” So it was in Egypt on the first Passover; at Calvary on Good Friday; and in Selma, on and near the Edmund Pettus Bridge – SIN writ in letters large. We offer great thanksgiving to God for the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus, and for those who paid for freedom with blood.

People: **Like the Exodus, from Goshen to Canaan, the March to Freedom begins with worship; and so it was from Brown Chapel to the Capitol. Therefore, let us worship!**

Leader: From the front steps of Brown Chapel in Selma to the front steps of the Capitol in Montgomery, a determined people marched – young and old, Black and white, male and female, believers, and skeptics, too – pressed their way to make their voices heard and to eventually make their votes count.

People: **Like the Exodus, the March to Freedom begins with worship; and so it was is from crossing the Jordan River to crossing the Alabama River. Therefore, let us worship!**

Leader: A half century later, the struggle continues. Montgomery was a destination, but the right to vote was the cause; liberation was the reason. Violent and mean men stood on the wrong side of history that day, now famously called “Bloody Sunday.” The right to vote is now being met with voter suppression strategies; extrajudicial death penalties are being exacted on young black men as we reaffirm the dignity of all and that Black lives matter!

People: **Like the Exodus, the March to Freedom begins with worship; and so it is, from Selma to Ferguson. Vigilance is still the price of freedom. Therefore, let us work and worship!**

Leader: There is so much to remember about Brown Chapel’s documented role in the Movement, a role that led to the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the presence it has had over the 50 years since. However, Brown Chapel is not a museum, neither is the AME church as a whole, clutching relics to claim a place in history. We are what we were meant to be from the beginning, a House of Worship, a place of study, a holy place to champion the concerns for human dignity, and a gathering place to address just causes.

People: **Like the Exodus, the March to Freedom begins with worship. Therefore, let us worship our Awesome God – in spirit and in truth!**

(A Litany by Bishop Adam J. Richardson, Jr.)