

SUBJECT: Commemorating Roberto Clemente

Resolved, That the 160th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh commends the observance of December 31, or an alternative date of August 18, as a local commemoration of Roberto Clemente for optional use in congregations and institutions throughout the Diocese of Pittsburgh, using either the propers for the Common of Saints or other propers authorized by the bishop;

Resolved, That this Convention encourages other dioceses and Episcopal communities to honor Roberto Clemente's legacy and to lift up his example of courage, humility, and self-giving love as a modern witness of Christ's call to serve the least of his siblings; and

Resolved, That this Convention directs the Secretary of the Convention to forward the following resolution to the 82nd General Convention of the Episcopal Church to add Roberto Clemente to the Episcopal Church Calendar:

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, That the 82nd General Convention designate December 31, or an alternative date of August 18, in the Episcopal Church Calendar as the commemoration of the life and work of Roberto Clemente, athlete, advocate for youth, humanitarian, and faithful Christian; and be it further

Resolved, That the 82nd General Convention direct the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to prepare appropriate biographical and liturgical resources for trial-use inclusion in *Lesser Feasts and Fasts* and report back to the 83rd General Convention.

Recommended Propers (subject to authorization by the bishop):

Traditional Collect

O Almighty and everlasting God, who didst call thy servant Roberto Clemente to glorify thee not only in strength of arm but in strength of character: Grant us grace to follow in his steps, in humble service to the poor, in justice for the forgotten, and in fearless witness to thy love; that, with him, we may finish our course in faith and rise to thy eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*

Contemporary Collect

Gracious God, you inspired your servant Roberto Clemente with a passion for justice and a heart for the poor. As he used his gifts to serve others and gave his life in an act of compassion, so strengthen us to follow his example: to seek the good of our neighbor, to use our talents for your glory, and to build a world where dignity is restored to all your people; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*

Lessons and Psalm

Wisdom 3:1–9

Psalm 112:1–9

1 John 3:16–18

Matthew 25:31–40 *or* Luke 10:23–37

Preface of a Saint (1)

EXPLANATION OR RATIONALE:

This resolution encourages local faith communities to commemorate the life and faith of Roberto Clemente and petitions the General Convention to add Roberto Clemente to the calendar of commemorations on the date of his death (December 31) with appropriate collects and readings in *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*. The date of Clemente's birth (August 18) would serve as an alternative date for the commemoration, should it be found pastorally preferable.

Roberto Clemente Walker (August 18, 1934–December 31, 1972) was a Hall of Fame baseball player, a humanitarian, and a tireless advocate for the dignity of all people. Born in Carolina, Puerto Rico, Clemente rose to prominence in the United States as a right fielder for the Pittsburgh Pirates, where he became a 15-time All-Star, 12-time Gold Glove winner, and 1966 National League MVP. But his legacy extends far beyond the baseball field.

Clemente was a proud Afro-Caribbean man who spoke openly about racial discrimination, injustice, and the dignity of marginalized communities—especially in the face of prejudice within Major League Baseball and American society. He used his platform to challenge systems of inequality and to uplift the voices of the poor and the forgotten.

Fluent in Spanish and English, Clemente was a bridge-builder between cultures and peoples. Deeply grounded in his Christian faith, he saw sports as a means to serve others and to glorify God. He once said, “Any time you have an opportunity to make a difference in this world and you don't, then you are wasting your time on Earth.”

On December 31, 1972, Clemente died in a plane crash while enroute to deliver humanitarian aid to earthquake victims in Nicaragua. He was 38 years old. His death on a mission of mercy sealed his legacy, not only as a sports icon, but as a model of sacrificial love, compassion, and service to neighbor.

Roberto Clemente's charitable work in Pittsburgh was as much a part of his legacy as his Hall of Fame baseball career. Beyond the roar of Forbes Field and Three Rivers Stadium, he moved quietly through the city, giving his own money, food, and clothing to struggling families and handing out gloves and bats to children who couldn't afford them. He was a frequent visitor at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, where he sat with sick kids, prayed with their families, and insisted that every child deserved to feel special.

As one of the first great Latino stars in Major League Baseball, Clemente also looked after Pittsburgh's immigrant and minority communities, helping newcomers adjust to life in the city and mentoring young Latino players who followed in his footsteps. Guided by his faith, he worked closely with local parishes and charitable groups, often without publicity, because for him compassion was a responsibility, not a performance.

Though he became internationally known for his relief missions abroad, in Pittsburgh he was remembered as the neighbor who gave freely of himself—time, money, and presence—making his adopted city feel like family.

Currently, the Episcopal Church calendar commemorates very few Latin American or Latino/a figures, and even fewer lay people. The inclusion of Roberto Clemente would represent a significant step in honoring the faithful witness of the laity, the vocation of athletes and public servants, and the diverse contributions of Hispanic and Caribbean leaders in the life of the Church. We commend the commemoration of Roberto Clemente, especially in contexts where his witness helps bridge cultural identities with Christian discipleship. The themes of his life—courage, generosity, dignity, and sacrificial love—resonate deeply with our baptismal promises and with the Church's ongoing call to justice and mercy.

As *A Great Cloud of Witnesses* reminds us: “[The saints] illuminate different facets of Christian maturity to spur us on to an adult faith in the Risen Christ and the life of the Spirit....

And, seeing them in those around us, we may be better able to cultivate these virtues and forms of holiness in the life of the Church—through grace—as we strive to imitate Christ as well” (p. XIII).

Roberto Clemente’s life and legacy clearly reflect this vision. His addition to our calendar is both fitting and long overdue.

ORIGINATOR: Rev. Brandon Cooper

SECOND SPONSOR: Rev. Noah Evans