April 4

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Martin Luther King (1929-1968) Baptist pastor and martyr

On April 4, 1968 Martin Luther King, a Baptist pastor and nonviolent African American civil rights leader, was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. His death was the natural conclusion of a life that had been dedicated entirely to serving the Gospel and his brothers and sisters.
Martin Luther, the son of a Baptist pastor, was born in Atlanta in 1929. During his childhood he experienced the cruelty and constant discrimination to which Americans of African origin were subjected.
Intellectually gifted and extremely charismatic as a public speaker, King decided to follow in his father's footsteps, and after studying philosophy and theology he was ordained a pastor. The first years of his ministry coincided with the reorganization of the African-American civil rights movement. Choosing the evangelical and Gandhian path of nonviolence, King began to organize peaceful protests, preaching and leading many of his followers along the paths of the Gospel. In 1964 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. With the support of President Kennedy and international recognition, King obtained important changes in American legislation. Yet he could not - nor did he try to - avoid arousing hatred on account of his faith and his nonviolence, which eventually led to his martyrdom.
His human and Christian witness, together with his commitment to freedom and fellowship among all peoples, have made Martin Luther King one of the best loved leaders of the twentieth century.

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

WESTERN CATHOLICS:
Isidore (d. ca. 636), bishop and doctor of the church (Roman and Ambrosian calendars)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (26 baramhat/maggabit):
Prassede (2nd cent.), virgin (Coptic Church)

LUTHERANS:
Ambrose of Milan (d. 397), bishop and doctor of the church
Martin Luther King, social reformer in the United States of America

MARONITES:
Agathopus and Theodulus of Thessaloniki (d. ca. 303), martyrs
Anicetus (d. ca. 175), pope

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:
George of Maleon (9th cent.), monk
Theodulus and Agathopus, martyrs
Joseph the Hymnographer (d. 883), monk

OLD CATHOLICS:
Ambrose, bishop and doctor of the church