

THE *Episcopal* CHURCH



MAY 11, 2014 – FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

THE FEAST OF THURGOOD MARSHALL

On May 17, the church celebrates the Feast of Thurgood Marshall, an Episcopalian who became the first African-American justice appointed to the United States Supreme Court.

Thurgood Marshall was born in 1908 in Baltimore, where he attended Frederick Douglass High School before majoring in American literature and philosophy at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania and graduating *magna cum laude* from Howard University law school in Washington, D.C.

After Marshall passed the bar in 1933, he went into private practice in Baltimore, specializing in civil-rights cases. By the following year, he became the legal counsel for Baltimore's branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Marshall won his first major civil-rights decision, *Murray v. Pearson*, in 1936, which allowed black students to attend the University of Maryland for the first time.

Marshall successfully argued 29 out of his 32 cases before the U.S. Supreme Court. He is most widely remembered for winning the 1954 case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, in which the Supreme Court declared the "separate but equal" doctrine unconstitutional and which resulted in the desegregation of U.S. public schools.

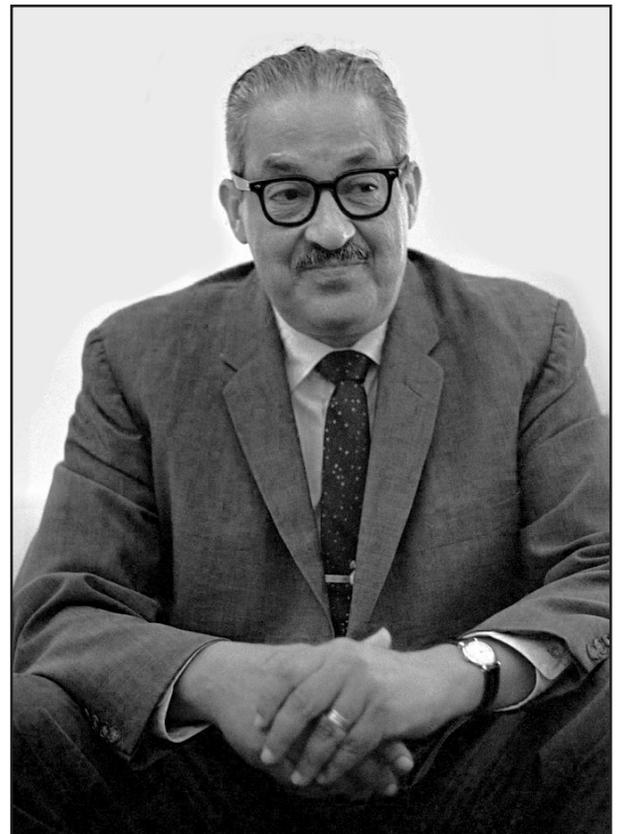
In 1967, President Lyndon Johnson appointed Marshall to the U.S. Supreme Court, where Marshall served until his retirement in 1991.

The Archives of the Episcopal Church features a page on Thurgood Marshall as part of an ongoing exhibit "The Church Awakens: African-Americans and the Struggle for Justice" on its website, http://www.episcopalarchives.org/Afro-Anglican_history/exhibit/leadership/marshall.php.

The Archives describes how, during Marshall's years in New York City, he served as senior warden on the vestry of St. Philip's Episcopal Church in Harlem and also served as a deputy to the 1964 General Convention. Then in 1965, when Marshall and his family moved to Washington, D.C., they joined St. Augustine's Episcopal Church. The Archives explains:

"As a devoted Episcopalian, Marshall was also an ardent believer in the separation of church and state. Consequently, Marshall attended church infrequently after his appointment as Supreme Court Justice, concerned that he would develop biased political views which would influence his judgment. His faith was revealed in his work, however, as he sought justice for all."

Despite attending St. Augustine's less regularly than his family did, according to "Holy Women, Holy Men" (Church Publishing, 2010), Marshall was affectionately known in his parish as "the Judge" and is remembered as being "a wise and godly man who knew his place and role in history and obeyed God's call to follow justice wherever it led" (p. 374).



The Honorable Thurgood Marshall, June 13, 1967
(Photo courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration)