

## Ordination of Florence Li Tim-Oi, 1944

*observed 24 January*



The Japanese occupation of China during the Second World War occasioned much suffering and many varied challenges in the lives of everyone. Some of these challenges led to revolutionary changes that might never had occurred under 'normal' circumstances. One of these was the ordination of Florence Li Tim-Oi to the priesthood by the Bishop of Hong Kong on 24 January 1944. Only men had been priests and few people thought of the possibility of women being priests, but these were extraordinary circumstances. When he ordained Li Tim-Oi to the priesthood, the Bishop understood himself to be merely acknowledging the priestly calling already evident in her life and ministry. For three years she had been presiding at the Eucharist as a Deacon because no priests were able to find their way into that part of occupied China. Unfortunately after the war there was so much protest against such an innovation that this first woman priest in the Anglican Communion had to refrain from exercising her ministry in her home country. Late in life she moved to Canada where she was able to live and minister as a priest. During the years of discussion and struggle to allow the ordination of women in Anglican churches in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, Florence Li Tim-Oi was frequently held up as a precedent, and as an example both of hope and of patient endurance. At her baptism she had chosen for herself the name Florence in honor of Florence Nightingale, who remained an example and inspiration to her. Like her namesake, this Florence has held aloft a beacon of hope and a call to service for many who have come after her. To learn more about this remarkable priest, what she experienced and what she has meant to so many, you can read 'A Letter to Florence' written by an old friend, the son of the Bishop who ordained her, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of her priesting. (<http://www.litim-oi.org/letter-2.html>)

*Lessons* Jeremiah 17:14-8a; Psalm 116:1-2; Galatians 3:23-28; Luke 10:1-9

*Collect* Gracious God, we thank you for calling Florence Li Tim-Oi, much-beloved daughter, to be the first woman to exercise the office of a priest in our Communion; By the grace of your Spirit inspire us to follow her example, serving your people with patience and happiness all our days, and witnessing in every circumstance to our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the same Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.