

Jan Hus, priest and teacher (1371-1415)

*Observed 6 July*



Jan Hus was a dedicated priest, professor, and preacher in the kingdom of Bohemia in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. He was profoundly disturbed by the warfare and political intrigue that characterized much of European church life in his time. Rival claimants to the papacy denounced one another and even declared war on each other. Hus found all this profoundly unedifying and asserted the notion that priest (and cardinals, bishops, etc.) properly

exercised spiritual authority in the lives of the people, but not worldly or political authority. This was of course very controversial in a time when church authority and civil authority were thoroughly entwined, with kings appointing bishops and popes approving kings. His criticisms of the Church always had to do with practice and discipline, not with theology. In addition to objecting to the entanglement of church leaders in politics, Hus was deeply disturbed by the practice which had grown up of 'reserving the chalice to the priest'. In his time, after the bread and wine were consecrated, the celebrant received both bread and wine, but shared only the bread with the people. Whatever the practical or theoretical reasons for this practice, Hus loudly complained that it was wrong because it departed from Scripture and the practice of the Early Church. Hus's assertions worried the authorities who had just succeeded in reuniting western Christendom after a long period of papal conflict. When Hus was brought up on charges of heresy, he was able to agree that the official position of the Church was true on the points in question, but refused to confess that he had ever held the heretical views of which he was accused. Because he would not recant, Hus was condemned and burned at the stake. Hus's followers continued to follow his views and administer Communion in both kinds, despite having armies sent to bring them into submission. The church that grew from these beginnings came to be called the Moravian church, with whom the Episcopal Church established full communion in 2010.

*Lessons* Job 22:21-30; Psalm 119:113-120; Revelation 23:1-6; Matthew 23:34-39

*Collect* Faithful God, you gave Jan Hus the courage to confess your truth and recall your Church to the image of Christ: Enable us, inspired by his example, to bear witness against corruption and never cease to pray for our enemies, that we may prove faithful followers of our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.