

4 notable remarks from President Obama's Easter Prayer Breakfast

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April 8, 2015

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WASHINGTON (RNS) President Obama turned both personal and preachy Tuesday during his annual Easter Prayer Breakfast, which he has hosted at the White House six times since he was elected.

The long list of Christian leaders attending included National Association of Evangelicals president Leith Anderson, Cardinal Donald Wuerl, retired Episcopal bishop Gene Robinson, civil rights veteran C.T. Vivian, and African Methodist Episcopal bishop Vashti McKenzie. Amy Butler of New York's Riverside Church gave the opening prayer.

Here are four memorable statements from the event:

1. Though he said, "I am no preacher," he almost preached:

"Even as we grapple with the sheer enormity of Jesus' sacrifice, on Easter we can't lose sight of the fact that the story didn't end on Friday," he said. "The story keeps on going. On Sunday comes the glorious resurrection of our savior."

"Easter is our affirmation that there are better days ahead—and also a reminder that it is on us, the living, to make them so," he added.

2. He acknowledged he falls short of the mark:

"Today we celebrate the magnificent glory of our risen savior. I pray that we will live up to his example. I pray that I will live up to his example. I fall short so often. Every day I try to do better."

3. He praised several preachers, including the late Gardner C. Taylor:

He quoted Martin Luther King Jr. and acknowledged Pope Francis, whom he will welcome to the White House later this year and “who encourages us to seek peace, to serve the marginalized and be good stewards of God’s creation.”

And he remembered Gardner C. Taylor, the “dean of American preaching,” who died on Easter Sunday at age 96.

“Anybody who had the privilege of hearing him speak knows what power he had,” the president said. “He was a friend of Dr. King who used his spellbinding sermons to spread the gospel and open people’s hearts and minds.”

4. He tears up when he thinks of his daughters:

“I want to thank everybody here for their prayers, which mean so much to me and Michelle, particularly at a time when my daughters are starting to grow up and starting to go on college visits. I need prayer. I start tearing up in the middle of the day and I can’t explain it. Why am I so sad? They’re leaving me.”