

Episcopal priest could be defrocked over 'Eucharistic fast'

by [Kathryn Post](#)

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Cayce Ramey. (Courtesy photo)

An Episcopal priest may lose his credentials in the denomination after observing a “Eucharistic fast” in the name of racial justice. A panel charged with overseeing the case in the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia concluded on May 8 that Cayce Ramey violated his ordination vows and should be “deprived of the right to exercise the gifts and spiritual authority of God’s word and sacraments conferred at ordinations to Priesthood and Diaconate,” according to a [news release](#).

Ramey, an activist against White supremacy who previously served as rector of All Saints Episcopal Church Sharon Chapel in Alexandria, Virginia, has refused to preside over the Eucharist or to receive it personally since 2022. His fast, he reportedly said, would last until he saw “clear proof of repentance and amendment of life in the Episcopal Church regarding white supremacy and racial injustice,” according to a [pretrial document](#) filed by a church attorney.

“I see racial justice as central to the Gospel and the only means of addressing the original sin of white supremacy in the United States and the Episcopal Church,” Ramey wrote in a [pretrial brief](#). “I was ordained into a part of God’s church built on the wealth, power, and privilege gained from the enslavement and ongoing oppression and exploitation of Black people. . . . How then can I administer the sacraments at the whites-only lunch-counter-altar built on top of the bodies and blood of people our theology enslaved?”

In March, a church trial took place at the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia’s headquarters in Richmond, *The Living Church* magazine [reported](#). Several witnesses testified during the trial, including two Black bishops who testified against Ramey, who is White. Gayle Harris, assistant bishop in Virginia, said [at the hearing](#) that while she acknowledged Ramey’s genuine passion for racial justice, she was insulted that the pain of her people had become “a platform for someone to deny the Eucharist.”

In a [statement](#), Bishop Mark Stevenson of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia called confronting racism “mission critical” for him and the diocese, and he commended Ramey’s leadership in that area. However, Stevenson added, the church proceedings were about whether Ramey violated his ordination vows, not about his racial justice efforts. “It is my firm belief that Episcopal priests can and must work to make our faith a living reality by providing the sacraments to their people, as well as work to secure justice and human dignity,” he said.

The news release states that Stevenson and Susan Goff, who at one point was acting bishop of the Diocese of Virginia, spent months in dialogue with Ramey seeking a pastoral resolution before Goff initiated an official church investigation in 2022.

The panel's order indicated that Ramey violated several church bylaws, including engaging in "habitual neglect of . . . the Holy Communion," failing to "abide by the promises and vows made when ordained" and engaging in conduct unbecoming of a clergy member. The panel recommended Ramey be deposed, meaning he would no longer be recognized as an ordained minister in the Episcopal Church.

The press release states that Stevenson must now decide whether to uphold the panel's decision. Per church canons, he must pronounce an official sentence after 20 days, but before 40 days. If Ramey appeals the panel's decision, then the Court of Review, an elected body made of laypeople, bishops, and other clergy, must issue a final order before the bishop imposes a sentence. —Religion News Service