

REPENT AND BELIEVE

The yearly celebration of the life and legacy of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is an occasion for people of all racial, cultural and religious backgrounds to take some time to make a personal and communal inventory in a number of areas.

Dr. King's life was dedicated primarily to the work of racial healing and reconciliation, advocating for the unemployed, the illiterate, the imprisoned, and all those who were disenfranchised from the network of real social security. At the core of Dr. King's life was his profound belief in the dignity and worth of every person. He felt it was his mission in life to raise up the dignity of every person, especially the lost and abandoned.

The life and work of Dr. King reminds us of the need for ongoing personal and communal conversion of the heart and mind in the midst of all that is happening in our world. What is needed each and every day of our human existence is a new heart and a new mind, a renewed desire to love and a renewed vision of peace and reconciliation among all people regardless of their race, culture, religious belief, and way of life.

As we celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. King this year, our thoughts need to be focused on world peace and not on more war and violence. We need to be aware more than ever before of the poor and needy, especially the millions of people suffering and dying from the ravages of HIV/AIDS in Africa. The whole continent will be wiped out and we will lose an essential piece of our world's history and culture if we do not take a more aggressive, proactive response to this modern-day genocide. Let us make a recommitment to the works of God that Dr. King tried to accomplish during his short-lived life on earth.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

The following readings are intended to stimulate personal reflection and communal dialogue. Write your thoughts and feelings down and share them with members of your family, your bible study group, or in another public forum.

Reading 1: Mark 1:14-20

After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." As he passed by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting their nets into the sea; they were fishermen. Jesus said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." Then they abandoned their nets and followed him. He walked along a little further and saw James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They too were in a boat mending their nets. Then he called them. So they left their father Zebedee in the boat along with the hired men and followed him.

Reading 2: Excerpt from Dr. King's Speech: "Where Do We Go From Here?"

"What is needed is a realization that power without love is reckless and abusive, and that love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love."

Reading 3: Excerpt from Dr. King's Speech: "Where Do We Go From Here?"

"...I still stand by non-violence. And I am still convinced that it is the most potent weapon available... for justice in this country. And the other thing is, I'm concerned about a better world. I'm concerned about justice; I'm concerned about brotherhood; I'm concerned about truth. And when one is concerned about that, he can never advocate violence. For through violence you may murder a murderer, but you can't murder murder. Through violence you may murder a liar, but you can't establish truth. Through violence you may murder a hater, but you can't murder hate through violence. Darkness cannot put out darkness; only light can do that."

PERSONAL INVENTORY AND TRANSFORMATION

Use the following questions for personal reflection and ongoing dialogue with others in your family and community.

- What are the personal obstacles in my life that prevent me from trusting and following the gospel of love and peace?
- What are the social and interpersonal "nets" that need mending and healing?
- Where is my life leading me at the moment?
- What are the "reckless and abusive" behaviors that need to be corrected in my life?
- What are the areas in my life that need attention, care, and love?
- In what ways do I advocate and contribute to the chaos and violence in the world?
- In what ways do I advocate and contribute to the works of peace and non-violence?

PRAYER FOR HEALING AND RECONCILIATION

This prayer and act of repentance may be used for individual prayer, family or community prayer.

OPENING PRAYER

Loving and merciful God, these are turbulent times. Help us to find our way through the conflict, chaos, and division that tear us apart. Give us the courage to confront the icons of racism, discrimination, war, violence, abuse, poverty, and human suffering. Empower us with your love so that we can correct those things and situations that stand against your plan for universal justice, peace, and unity. Help us to care more about the needs and concerns of others rather than our own selfish interests. Instill deep within our hearts a desire to do what is right, to defend life, and to uphold the dignity and worth

of every person regardless of race, culture, language, belief, and way of life. May all our thoughts and actions bring about racial healing and reconciliation in our local communities and beyond. Amen.

ACT OF REPENTANCE

For the times I have resisted God's universal call to justice and peace... *Lord, have mercy.*

For the times I have failed to love my neighbor... *Lord, have mercy.*

For the times I have given into self-hatred... *Lord, have mercy.*

For the times I have ignored the plight of the poor, the homeless, and persons living with HIV/AIDS... *Lord, have mercy.*

For the times I have preferred the darkness rather than the light... *Lord, have mercy.*

For the times I have not advocated for racial healing and reconciliation in my community... *Lord, have mercy.*

PRAYER OF HEALING

God of love and compassion, you know the landscape of our lives. You know the places where we long for inner peace and happiness. Heal us of our addictive behaviors of selfishness, greed, arrogance, and pride. Open our hearts to receive your unconditional love, mercy, and compassion and help us to reach out to others and mend broken promises, broken visions and dreams, broken relationships, and broken lives. Give us the wisdom to know the pathway to true peace and love. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

For an end to all war and conflict throughout the world and the establishment of peace everywhere... *Lord, save your people.*

For all civil, national and religious leaders that they will use the power entrusted to them to build a just and peaceful world... *Lord, save your people.*

For the millions of people suffering and dying from HIV/AIDS that the world community with respond with compassion and medical assistance... *Lord, save your people.*

For racial healing and conflict between people of various racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds that they may live in mutual respect and harmony... *Lord, save your people.*

For the conversion and transformation of people's hearts and minds into love and kindness... *Lord, save your people.*

For greater respect for the dignity of others and human life... *Lord, save your people.*

Add your own personal intentions here.

OUR FATHER

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, as you called your first disciples to abandon their nets and follow in your footsteps, you call us to abandon our nets of security and to surrender to your divine plan.

Teach us how to love and respect our brothers and sisters, to care for those who are neglected, abandoned and in need. Show us the pathway to racial healing and reconciliation, to universal peace and justice. Forgive us for the many times we have lost sight of your vision and muffled your call to love one another as you have loved us. Give us yet another opportunity to show you that we are intent on being faithful to you and to your mission of love and unity.

In the days ahead, may our nets be cast wide so that we can create a world wherein all people can feel safe, secure, and at peace with one another. Amen.

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Project Reach Out

22 State Street • Westfield, MA 01085
projectreachout.org

Martin Luther King Day

Repent



and Believe

A program of
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