

# *Celebrating The Dream*

On January 19 we will celebrate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., born on January 15, 1929. When Martin Luther King was born, separate but equal was the law of the land and most of this country was segregated whether by law or custom. He was born at the beginning of the great depression as the nation was being plunged into an abyss of unemployment and hopelessness.

Into this abyss a child was born like children have been born since the beginning of time. His birth only noted by his family. Yet this seemingly ordinary child was destined to become the prophetic conscience of a nation.

Dr. King's message of love, peace, equality and justice challenged us to strive to live up to the Gospel message of Jesus and to the creed of this nation, "that all are created equal." His dream became the clarion call for all men and women of good will, of every religion, and stature in life.

Forty-five years ago on August 28, 1963, on the steps of the Lincoln monument, Dr. King proclaimed his dream of brotherhood, of black, white and brown, rich and poor, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, living together as brothers and sisters, dwelling together in God's perfect love.

On that hot sultry day his dream about brotherhood and equality was simply that, a dream. The south was embroiled in a life and death battle to hold on to its old ways, to remain separate and unequal. From Emmitt Till to Medgar Evers good people, black and white, had given their very lives in the struggle for freedom.

Fast-forward forty-five years to August 28, 2008. We witness an African American accepting his party's nomination for the presidency of the United States and on November 4, we witnessed the election of Barack Obama to the highest office of the land. We saw our nation live up to its creed that "all men are created equal."

We saw thousands of Americans of every race, nationality, and tongue stand together as one on that historic night. There were the veterans of the Civil Rights Movement and newborn babies in their mother's arms, the sons and daughters of immigrants and the sons and daughters of former slaves, all linked together by this defining moment in history. For a brief moment the world saw this nation as that beacon of hope where every child regardless of circumstance of birth has the opportunity to be judged by the content of his or her character.

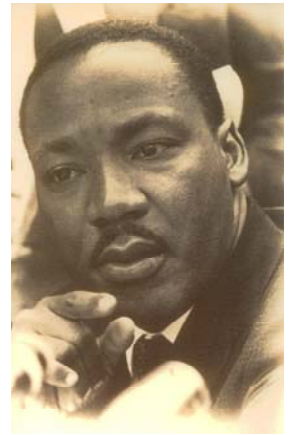
On January 20, 2009, Barack Obama will stand on the steps of the Capitol in the shadow of the Lincoln monument where Dr. King dared to dream of a better America and take the oath of Office as President of the United States. Whether we voted for him or not, he is our president and we must pray for him and his family, for their safety and well-being.

But our work does not end there. As Catholics, we must insure that our voices are heard in the halls of power as we speak out against the intrinsic evils of our day, which stand in opposition to the dignity of human life; abortion, death penalty, unjust war, poverty, hunger, euthanasia, racism, sexism, and materialism.

We must continue Dr. King's work of creating the beloved community where every child is guaranteed the right to life, education, and healthcare, where we act as responsible stewards of the environment and six percent of the world's population no longer consumes eighty percent of the world's resources, where no one goes to bed hungry, where women are not abused or violated, and where the unborn and those who are most vulnerable in our society are protected and treated with dignity.

While Dr. King's dream is no longer simply a dream in 2009, there is still much work to be done. The battle is not over and the victory is not won. We must remain vigilant.

My prayer in this New Year is that God will give our new President wisdom and grace in the execution of his office and that we as a nation will act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.



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