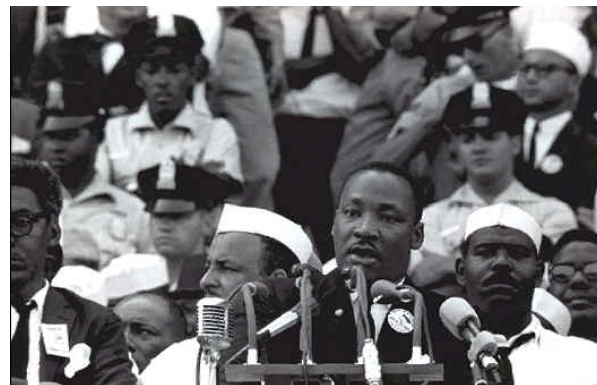
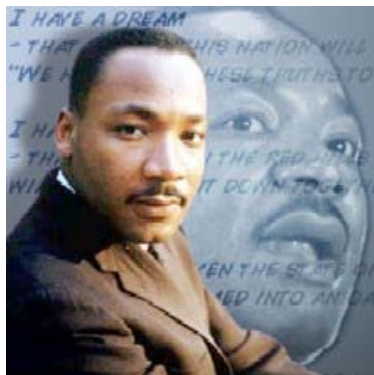


*Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Inauguration of President Barack Obama*

In two days we will as a nation be making history: the election and inauguration of the first African-descent president of the United States Barack Obama. Many will no doubt revel in – and rightly so – in this historical moment, but we would do grave injustice to our country if we were to treat this momentous event as an “arrival point,” rather than a “beginning” point.

We have not arrived, but we’re on the way.



Martin Luther King, Jr., our great American martyr to heal a people and a society wracked by the scourge of segregation. Rev. Dr. King was called from out of a society in which there were blacks and whites could not drink from the same water faucet; where blacks were

legally required to sit in the back of the bus and where blacks not allowed to swim in the same pools as whites.



Here in California at that same time, Mexicans were not able to purchase houses in the same neighborhood as non-Mexicans in parts of Los Angeles and in San Francisco suburbs, Asian women were not allowed to sign home leases.



A person of faith is able to see beyond such tragedies of injustice. Rev. Dr. King said, "I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality... I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word."

Martin Luther King reminded us that people of faith are not defined by what is seen, but rather by what they know to be true.



We know that equality and fair treatment is true for all people. When people of faith see that equality and fairness are utterly absent from the human condition, an alarm should go off in our heads and in our hearts! A person of faith awakens from the slumber of accepting an unjust status quo. As people of faith we know that all people are created as sister and brother and when we see them living in a relationship built on exploitation and inequality, we are indeed agitated into action.

If women didn't agitate for the right to vote, they would never have received that right. If women didn't agitate for equal pay for equal work, they would be even further behind than they are today!



Inspired by the work of Martin Luther King, Cesar Chavez joined the march for justice. Called by the Spirit, Chavez worked with farm workers: to agitate owners of the fields and vineyards for better working conditions in the fields. Both King, Chavez and many lesser known women and men agitated and continue to agitate for a society that they can see through the eyes of faith. A society of common vision and common good. Let's look at the first reading: Samuel was agitated.

The Spirit agitated Samuel awake from his slumber. Samuel heard the voice and went to Eli, his father. Eli represented the old guard, the status quo. Eli tells Samuel to go back to sleep. You see, the Spirit agitated Samuel, not Eli. So Samuel returns to sleep. Yet again, he hears the Spirit, agitated again, he seeks out the wisdom of his father.

This second time Eli realizes that the Spirit is agitating Samuel and not him. He then concedes power and control and tells Samuel to say, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening..."

Samuel had to go beyond simply saying, “I’m here.” He had to state that he was *listening*. Faith isn’t simply saying, “I’m here.” Faith requires more.

Faith requires listening to the signs of the times: to wake up and hear the voices of the poor, the marginalized, the weak, the suffering.



Two disciples of John the Baptist heard John say, “Behold the Lamb of God.” Something of this truth resonated in their hearts and immediately they knew that they had to follow the Christ. Christ then turned to them, looked into their hearts and asked what is it that you are looking for? What stirs your souls? What gets you up at night? What burns within your heart? What was that truth? That we are brother and sister to each other? That forgiveness and reconciliation are more important than who is “right” and who is “wrong?” That God loves all people unconditionally? That love is stronger than hate?

Christ invited them to live the truth with him on his way, “Come and you will see.”



Christ was on a journey – on the move! He invited the disciples, “Come.” Ultimately the disciples followed Jesus to Jerusalem: to confront power with the Truth! To confront Herod and Pilate with the Truth of justice, love, equality, forgiveness, freedom, compassion, healing for the untouchables and care for the poor. This was Christ’s journey, a journey that led to the cross.

Now note the detail included in the Gospel: “it was around 4 pm in the afternoon,” indicating that the disciples broke bread with Christ. In the context of breaking bread, the disciples, heard his stories and were exposed to Christ’s vision of the Kingdom. When we break bread here in Eucharist, we share in this Truth. And these next few years will be begin our journey. We will begin the journey and abide with each other in the march of history, in the great pilgrimage of justice. We will have the opportunity to abide with the immigrant, with the low-wage worker, with the retuning soldier, with the lost, the fearful, the tearful and mournful.

So let us pray for our new president and see that the journey to the inauguration is a beginning, not an arrival.



This historic moment is the beginning of a relentless struggle for justice for all people. Monday we honor a great American martyr, Martin Luther King, Jr. by recommitting our selves as people of faith: to see beyond race, economic achievement, gender, education level, physical and mental disability, sexual orientation and religion. So, if any of this “rang true” for you or if you were agitated, then begin that journey with the One who bids us to join the journey:

“Come with me and see!”



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