



Statement Commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Assassination of the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr.

April 4, 2018, will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the violent assassination of the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King Jr. It offers us each a moment to consider the significance of this travesty of justice in the history of our nation and for our responsibilities towards justice in our contemporary society.

Martin Luther King Jr. preached and lived his life as a Christian committed simultaneously to societal and individual change and to non-violent conversion motivated by the life of Jesus Christ. Dr. King's life and ministry manifested the responsibility of Christians to exercise a prophetic voice for conversion and societal change. His message was one of faith and of right reason because it continues to speak to our common human nature created in the image and likeness of God.

We would be mistaken to think that changes required by the Gospel regarding racial and societal justice were thoroughly and completely brought about in the time of Dr. King's life and that racism no longer plagues us. While racial segregation formalized in the rule of law was changed through the efforts of Dr. King and so many others, the material elements of racial segregation remain in human hearts and in exclusionary social practices among so many people, thereby effecting poverty and violence in societal and family life.

It is also important for us to remember that Martin Luther King Jr. during his life and ministry called for the conversion of legitimate and political authority within the common good of society towards greater respect and solidarity among people of every faith and racial background. Today, racism is joined in its destructive force by voices of anarchy that would call not for the conversion of legitimate authority in society and the political order but for its violent overthrow.

In keeping with the non-violent and true approach of Martin Luther King Jr., let us examine our consciences and act towards greater unity among all people to form a more just society based on respect for our shared and common humanity created in the image and likeness of God. In so doing, we must also reject the forces of chaos that would prey upon our fears and incite violence and lawlessness within our community.

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