

## **Pastoral Easter Message, 3 April 2018**

My Dear Friends in Christ,

Fifty years ago, this Wednesday, April 4, 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was martyred in Memphis an event that produced shock, grief, and deep rage throughout America. A modern-day prophet who preached non-violence as the only Godly way to achieve racial equality and economic and personal freedom, King was gunned down while standing on the balcony of his motel, after having delivered a stirring speech the night before to that city's sanitation workers who were on strike seeking better wages and greater dignity.

In that last speech of his life, Dr. King seemed to foresee his own imminent death, knowing that this would mean not experiencing the fulfillment of the struggle that he and many others were engaged in. Alluding to Moses on Mount Nebo gazing across at Canaan and believing he would not live to enter it, Dr. King declared, "I've been to the mountaintop, I've looked over, and I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you, but I'm here tonight to tell you that we as a people will get to the promised land." He was saying, in effect, that though his own life might be taken, no one could take away the dream that had been the moving force of that life and the spiritual and moral energy behind his faith, the dream of justice and civil liberty, the dream of social peace and mutual regard, the dream that one day each would be judged not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.

Fifty years later, those words and that vision still ring true, even though at times (and in times such as these) it may seem that we are as far away from their fulfillment as ever. It's easy for us to be discouraged. In this half century, so many other dreams have been dashed, so much more bloodshed, and so many other, unsung prophets of justice and love have gone down under the weight of hatred and mistrust and fear. And yet now in this April, as we welcome the new life that the resurrected Christ brings (in the season that Dr. King would no doubt have enjoyed), we are compelled to look with him in hope and to see what he saw, though the reality was beyond his reach. We are called again to work and sacrifice for a future in which we may not live to take full part.

This is Christian hope in action. This is the wisdom and power that lie at the heart of our Easter faith. This is the eternal witness of the triumph of life over death, a witness that Martin Luther King embodied as few others in our time. Despite our many flaws as a country and as individuals, we have the capacity to be, I believe, what God has always desired us to be: a people ever striving, ever becoming, ever making good the dream of a brighter, braver day. Though confronted by evil, by the example of our Savior we need not be conquered by it. "He is not here, he has risen!" proclaims the Gospel! So too our souls and our wills, as we rise with our Lord and make his life our own, as we look with renewed strength and greater confidence to a future yet to be made, in the spirit of all the saints and dreaming prophets who have gone before.

Many Blessings, and a Happy Easter!  
Fr. Gordon +