

## **Day Two, January 19, Martin Luther King, Jr.**

Welcome to Day Two of our ecumenical prayer for Christian Unity. Each day this week we are highlighting leaders in the ecumenical movement from whom we can learn and apply actions in our own lives. Today we reflect on the work of Martin Luther King, Jr.

**Together, let us pray.**

### **John 1:1-14**

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

*There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.*

*The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God — children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.*

*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Reflecting on the Incarnation of Jesus as described in John 1:1-14 reveals profound connections to the work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This passage opens with the powerful affirmation that “the Word was with God, and the Word was God,” ultimately declaring that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” This act of God choosing to enter our human experience is a testament to divine love, revealing the depths of compassion and the commitment to justice that characterizes Christ’s ministry.

Dr. King’s life and work resonate with this message of the Incarnation. Just as Jesus came to be fully present with humanity, King dedicated his life to standing in solidarity with those who were suffering, marginalized, and oppressed. He embodied the belief that love must be active, that faith calls us to engage deeply with the struggles of our communities. In this way, King mirrored Christ’s example of radical love and self-sacrifice, showing us that true leadership involves stepping into the pain of others.

John 1:14 beautifully states, “We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” King’s vision for America was similarly rooted in grace and truth. He believed that justice must be pursued not through hatred or violence but through a deep commitment to love and understanding. His famous assertion that “hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that” reflects the grace that Jesus exemplified—an invitation to transform society through nonviolent resistance and reconciliation.

The passage also highlights the theme of light overcoming darkness: “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” King’s work was a beacon of hope during a time of great societal darkness. He preached about the need for justice and equality, challenging systemic racism and oppression. His steadfast belief in the power of love and light to overcome hatred inspired countless individuals to join in the struggle for civil rights, echoing the promise that light will ultimately prevail.

Furthermore, John 1 emphasizes the importance of community: “He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.” Often those who advocate for justice encounter resistance from their own communities. King experienced this firsthand, facing criticism from various quarters, including some within the church. Yet, he persisted, motivated by a vision of a beloved community where all people would be treated with dignity and respect, reflecting the inclusive nature of Christ’s love.

The Incarnation is not just a theological concept; it is a call to action. As Jesus lived among us, experiencing our joys and sorrows, King’s work reminds us that we are called to engage with the world around us. His dedication to nonviolence and social justice is a direct application of the principles of the Incarnation—an understanding that we are to be the hands and feet of Christ in a broken world.

During this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, the connection between the Incarnation of Jesus in John 1:1-14 and the work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. invites us to reflect on our own commitment to justice and love. Just as Christ came to dwell among us, we are called to be present with those who suffer and to act with grace and truth. King’s legacy challenges us to embody this transformative love, to be a light in the darkness, and to strive for a world that mirrors the compassion and justice of the Incarnate Word.

**Take a few moments of silence and reflect:**

- How does faith in Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, inspire and shape your life?
- How does Dr. King inspire or challenge you to go out of your comfort zone and work for justice?
- What is one action you can take this week to create a “Beloved Community”?

**Then Pray:**

Glory to you, O Christ. Glory to you!

Word of God, you became flesh and came to dwell among us. You have shared our life in all things; you died as we all die.

Son of David, desired by the righteous and the prophets, you have proclaimed the good news to the poor; you have proclaimed the Lord’s time of favor.

You came to break the chains of bondage; you went about doing good; you have opened the way to the presence of God for all.

You came into the world in weakness and poverty; you have confounded the proud with your humility; you have drawn the weary and overburdened to you.

Thank you for sending leaders like Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr to show us how to lead.

Instill in our hearts that same passion to create a just society where all are free

Glory to you, O Christ. Glory to you! Amen.

Thank you for praying with us today. Please join us again tomorrow.

This octave of prayers is sponsored by three Catholic spirituality centers: the Marillac Center in Leavenworth, Kansas, the Sophia Center in Atchison, Kansas, and Precious Blood Renewal Center in Liberty, Missouri.

We encourage you to share these prayers with members of your family and circle of acquaintances, including those who belong to another faith tradition.