



Dear Friends,

On this Martin Luther King Jr. Day of 2025, I am mindful of uncertainties and anxieties in our nation and in the world – the ongoing wildfires in California that have engulfed entire neighborhoods and continuing hostilities in Ukraine, Gaza and Sudan, though with a fragile ceasefire hopefully emerging in the Holy Land.

I am also reflecting on the recent passing of President Jimmy Carter and his ties to Rev. King. Perhaps that is what drew me to this MLK quote from his famous “I have a Dream” speech, which also inspired his statue at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial in Washington, D.C.

“Out of the mountain of despair, a stone of hope.”

Although President Carter never met Dr. King, he was inspired by his work of nonviolent resistance to oppression and advocacy for equal rights. In 2013, Carter offered remarks on the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington. He recalled how Dr. King never lost contact with his roots back home – “helping Tennessee garbage workers...when he gave his life to a racist bullet.” Carter described the passage of the Civil Rights Act due to King’s work as “one of the finest moments of my life”.

While in office, President Carter presented Coretta Scott King with a posthumous Medal of Freedom for her husband. The citation read, “[Dr. King] gazed at the great wall of segregation and saw that the power of love could bring it down. He made our nation stronger because he made it better.”

Both leaders were firmly grounded in their faith and provide a model for all of us of selfless leadership. As President Carter often remarked:

“My faith demands that I do whatever I can, wherever I can, whenever I can, for as long as I can with whatever I have, to try to make a difference.”

As we celebrate MLK Day in the lingering midst of global injustice, let us be guided by Dr. King’s work and dream, the words and deeds of those he inspired, and the legacy of his faith and activism. As he shared in his *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, “We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

Pope Francis underscored the same conviction in his 2020 encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*: “Each one of us is called to be an artisan of peace, by uniting and not dividing, by extinguishing hatred and not holding on to it, by opening paths of dialogue...In this way, we will be able to see ourselves, not as ‘others’, but as neighbors, in the truth of our shared dignity as children of Almighty God.”

This unflappable commitment to justice and the common good can spur each of us on to find ways – big and small – to make our nation and world better.

Yours faithfully,

Joseph G. Marina, S.J.
President