

O God of Love, Power and Justice

CAC faculty member Rev. Dr. Barbara Holmes calls the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, whose life we honour this week, “a great contemplative, one who used the spiritual essence of nonviolence as a tool for liberating the social order and the spiritual authority of a denigrated people.” [1] We share with you this prayer of gratitude for King’s life and work, which is also of petition—that we might continue God’s work of liberation for all.

O God of Love, Power and Justice, who wills the freedom and fulfillment of all your children. We thank you for the constancy of your loving kindness and tender mercies toward us. Especially on this day as we celebrate the birthday and life of your servant and prophet, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We are reminded that in every age you raise up seers and sayers and doers of justice. We marvel at the way by which you shaped a young black boy from Georgia into a towering figure of his time—to awaken the conscience of the nations, to rekindle a passion for freedom, equality, and peace; to redirect the traffic of human affairs from the back alley of bigotry toward the grand concourse of courage and compassion.

We stand in awe at the marvellous networking by which you built a movement around a man of vision. It included blacks and whites, Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, conservatives and progressives, rich and poor, business and labour. This “coalition of conscience” dedicated itself to the proposition that the American dream of freedom and equality could be made real through courageous action in a spirit of love, in pursuit of human dignity for all. This dignity includes all who suffer from homelessness, joblessness, purposelessness, carelessness, hopelessness.

Because our needs are so great today, and your care so constant, we know that you are rebuilding the network of compassion around new visionaries who you have assembled for this hour. Surprise us with the discovery of how much power we have to make a difference in our day:

—A difference in the way citizens meet, greet, respect, and protect the rights of each other.

—A difference in the breadth of our vision of what is possible in humanization, reconciliation, and equalization of results in our great city.

—A difference in the way government, business, and labour can work together, for justice and social enrichment.

—A difference in our response to the needy, and a difference in our appreciation for those who give of themselves for the surviving and thriving of our beautiful people.

Use this season of celebration to spark new hope and stir up our passion for new possibilities. Make compassion and the spirit of sacrifice to be the new mark of affluence of character. Strengthen us to face reality and to withstand the rigor of tough times in the anticipation of a bright side beyond the struggle. Inspire, empower, and sustain us until we reach the mountaintop, and see that future for which our hearts yearn.

This is our fervent and sincere prayer. Amen.