



DIOCESE OF HARRISBURG

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

4800 Union Deposit Road | Harrisburg, PA 17111-3710
bishopoffice@hbgdiocese.org | (717) 657-4804 ext. 354 | www.hbgdiocese.org

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On this Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, we pause once again to honor the enduring legacy of a leader whose courage and faith transformed our nation and awakened the conscience of the world. Dr. King's steadfast commitment to justice, equality, and nonviolence invites each of us to contemplate the inherent dignity of every human person, created in the image and likeness of God.

Last November, our Holy Father reminded us, "The peace Jesus brings is like a fire, and it asks a lot of us. It asks us, first of all, to *take a stand*. Faced with injustice, inequality, where human dignity is trampled underfoot, where the fragile are silenced: take a stand. To hope is to take a stand. To hope is to understand in our hearts and show in our actions that things must not continue as before."¹

In a world too often marked by division, mistrust, and fear, Dr. King's example remains a powerful reminder that peace and justice are inseparable. His words - "darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that (MLK Day 2025: Reflections of Dr. King's Dream - The Baltimore Times)" - continue to challenge us to meet hatred and prejudice not with bitterness or indifference, but with love rooted in truth and grounded in faith.

The call to bridge divides is not a mere ideal; it lies at the heart of our Christian discipleship. Christ calls us to love not only those who are easy to love, but also those who are different from us, those whom society may overlook, and those whose cries for justice remain unanswered. In working to heal the wounds of racism and prejudice, we join in Christ's ministry of reconciliation and bear witness to the unity for which He prayed.

Racism, in all its forms, wounds the Body of Christ and obstructs the flourishing of all people. It diminishes our shared humanity and obscures the truth that every person is a beloved child of God. Today and every day, we are called to examine our own hearts, to repent of attitudes and actions that divide, and confront the sin of racism wherever it persists. Together, we must strive to build a society founded on justice, mutual respect, and peace.

As followers of Christ in the Diocese of Harrisburg, let us renew our commitment to fostering communities of welcome, compassion, and understanding. May Dr. King's example inspire each of us to be instruments of God's peace — to break down walls of division, to heal hearts wounded by prejudice, and to affirm the sacred dignity of every human life. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit guides our steps toward unity, and that our shared challenges reflect the light of Christ in a world longing for hope.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Timothy C. Senior
Bishop of Harrisburg

¹ Leo XIV, "Jubilee Audience Catechesis of Pope Leo XIV," *The Holy See*, <https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/audiences/2025/documents/20251122-udienza-giubilare.html> (accessed January 13, 2026)