

Reflection

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Today, we honor in a special way the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In June of 1963, Dr. King preached a sermon on the parable of the midnight visitor needing food, comparing the midnight in the story to the situation in his world.

He said, "It is midnight in the parable, it is also midnight in our world and the darkness is so deep that we can hardly see which way to turn. It is midnight within the social order. On the international horizon, nations are engaged in a colossal and bitter contest for supremacy ... the arms race continues and nuclear tests still explode in the atmosphere, with the grim prospect that the very air we breathe will be poisoned by radioactive fallout. The midnight in our external (life) is paralleled by midnight in our internal life. ... Everywhere paralyzing fears harrow people by day and haunt them by night. Deep clouds of anxiety and depression are suspended in our mental skies." That was 56 years ago – has anything changed?

We have just completed the season of Christmas – the coming of God into our world, Jesus, Light into our darkness. In today's Gospel, Jesus, Emmanuel, tells us that there is something new in his life and teachings that will not "work" with the old ways of understanding God. What is new and remains new is that every single human being has an innate, that is inborn, dignity that God has given from God's own being. We have no right to "own" or destroy the lives and dignity of other human beings or to consider any human person inferior and disposable because of race, creed, gender, state of human development or any other human distinction. This is the new wine that won't survive in old wineskins.

Dr. King had a dream for us, "the refusal to accept the view that humankind was so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daylight of peace could never become a reality." Jesus' dream for humankind and the cosmos is LOVE. As Richard Rohr states: "We are made in love, for love and unto love and it is out of this love that we work."

We cannot fix the entire world but we can stretch out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach. Any small, loving thing that one can do for another in this darkness will help.

How shall we be about this today?