

22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Fifty years ago this week, Martin Luther King addressed a quarter of a million people gathered around the Lincoln Memorial. He said, "I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up, live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.'" Slavery has been called the original sin of the United States, and discrimination is its lingering shadow. Discrimination was worse in 1963 when Martin Luther King gave this address; we have made progress, but we still have work to do. We have an African American President in the White House, but the Trayvon Martin verdict a month ago made many people feel in spite of due process that the jury sanctioned the right of whites to kill unarmed blacks. People of color continually live under the suspicious eyes of discrimination. People have also noted the contrast between King's dream of people living in peace and the wars raging in Syria and Egypt. We have come far, but we still have far to go.

Mayor Sly James recently explained to President Obama that the causes of youth violence in Kansas City are threefold: poverty, lack of educational attainment, and access to guns. Here at St. Anthony's we can help the city with all these areas, but especially with education. I'm appealing again to parents, please enroll all your children in religious education here every year on Wednesday nights or Sunday mornings. We have great kids in our community. If they develop their education, they will make a tremendous impact on the future.

They won't have to do this alone. They can rely on the help of God. Today's responsorial psalm has us sing this refrain: "God, in your goodness, you have made a home for the poor." It shows how God offers special care to those who have less. Are there orphans? God is their father. Are there widows? God is their defender. God provides homes to those who are forsaken, and prosperity for those who are in prison. God provides rain for the fields where flocks can graze and the hungry can be fed. The very people who feel abandoned by society are the ones whom God will never forget. The poor have this advantage over the rich: Because God desires a more just world, God gives full attention to the poor.

We can help build that just world by ending discrimination within us, promoting education, and building friendships. Martin Luther King said, "When we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children -- black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics -- will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, 'Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!'"