



IMMACULATE HEART^{OF} MARY CATHOLIC CHURCH

A LETTER FROM THE PASTOR

APRIL 22, 2018

Dear friends in the Risen Lord,

I was deeply moved to observe that the March For Our Lives, the student-driven protest against gun violence, came about just days before the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. Of course, the presence and words of Dr. King's 9-year-old granddaughter at the Washington rally gave the world a living reminder of the connection between that event and King's legacy. But even before young Yolanda Renee King spoke, the occasion was pregnant with Dr. King's example and spirit. Once again young people were confronting a manifold evil in a non-violent way, espousing a dream that, as King put it in his famous speech at the 1963 March on Washington, "we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope..., to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood." But it was not long before the young leaders of the March for Our Lives began to be vilified in some quarters for their heroic efforts—which I suppose ties them even more deeply to Dr. King's life and witness.

The anniversary has motivated me to locate my copy of Taylor Branch's magisterial history of the civil rights movement, *America in the King Years*. I'm often asked about books that have had an impact on me, and I always put this 3,000-page trilogy very near the top. (I was impressed that President Obama mentioned it as one of his favorites, too, in an interview some years ago.) I have placed those books on my nightstand for summer reading, and I'll be happy to share them as I finish them.

In a joint venture between our two parishes, Father Bryan Small, pastor of Sts. Peter and Paul in Decatur, will join me in leading a local pilgrimage in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Dr. King's death. On Saturday, May 19 we will visit the MLK National Historical Park, the King Center and the Center for Civil and Human Rights. Details are elsewhere in this bulletin. I hope many of you may choose to join us.

Your brother in Christ's word and work,