



February 8, 2009 Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

For Racial Reconciliation:

A 21st Century Prayer for Racial Justice Sunday

Leader: Our litany today places in conversation across the centuries
voices of leaders experienced in the challenges
of community building and reconciliation.
Let us enter their conversation, and pray:

All: Even though we are free
of the demands and expectations of each other,
we have voluntarily become a servants to any and all
in order to reach a wide range of people:
religious, nonreligious,
meticulous moralists, loose-living immoralists,
the defeated, the demoralized—whoever!

Paul, First Letter to the Corinthians, 9:19-20 (1st Century)

Reader 1: “Race is an issue that I believe this nation cannot afford to ignore right now...
For the African-American community, that path (of a more perfect union) means
embracing the burdens of our past without becoming victims of our past. It means
continuing to insist on a full measure of justice in every aspect of American life. But it also
means binding our particular grievances – for better health care, and better schools, and
better jobs - to the larger aspirations of all Americans.”

Barack Obama (2008)

Reader 2: “I must confess, my friends, the road ahead will not always be smooth. There will
still be rocky places of frustration and meandering points of bewilderment. There will be
inevitable setbacks here and there. There will be those moments when the buoyancy of
hope will be transformed into the fatigue of despair. Our dreams will sometimes be
shattered and our ethereal hopes blasted.”

Martin Luther King, Jr. (1967)

All: Moreover, we didn't take on other ways of being.
We kept our bearings in Christ—
but we entered the worldview of others
and tried to experience things from their point of view.

Paul, First Letter to the Corinthians, 9: 21

Reader 1: “In the white community, the path to a more perfect union means acknowledging
that what ails the African-American community does not just exist in the minds of black
people; that the legacy of discrimination - and current incidents of discrimination, while less
overt than in the past - are real and must be addressed. Not just with words, but with
deeds.”

Barack Obama

Reader 2: “Difficult and painful as it is, we must walk on in the days ahead with an audacious faith in the future...let us remember that there is a creative force in this universe, working to pull down the gigantic mountains of evil, a power that is able to make a way out of no way and transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows.” *Martin Luther King, Jr.*

All: **Furthermore, we've become
just about every sort of servant there is
in our attempts to lead those we meet
into a way of life that is God centered.
We did all this because of God's message of love and justice for all.
...We didn't just want to talk about it;
we wanted to participate in it!**

Paul, First Letter to the Corinthians, 9:22-23

Reader 1: “In the end, then, what is called for is nothing more, and nothing less, than what all the world's great religions demand – that we do unto others as we would have them do unto us. Let us be our brother's keeper, Scripture tells us. Let us be our sister's keeper. Let us find that common stake we all have in one another, and let our politics reflect that spirit as well.” *Barack Obama*

Reader 2: “Let us realize the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice.” *Martin Luther King, Jr.*

All: Amen and Amen!

A 21st Century Prayer for Racial Reconciliation was written by the Rev. Dr. Bentley de Bardelaben, Minister for Communications, Justice Witness Ministries, UCC. 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 adapted from **The Message: the Bible in Contemporary Language** © 2002 by Eugene H. Peterson. "Where Do We Go from Here?", Martin Luther King, (<http://www.indiana.edu/~ivieweb/mlkwhere.html>) and "A More Perfect Union", Barack Obama's Speech on Race, March 18, 2008, Philadelphia, PA. (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/03/18/obama-race-speech-read-t_n_92077.html)



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