

How Will You Spend MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY?



*"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free,
there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."*

Galatians 3:28

Martin Luther King Day is almost here. Most American holidays have accumulated their own unique customs and traditions over many years. Mention Thanksgiving, the Fourth of July, or Mother's Day, and most people can instantly recite their favorite things to do. But what about MLK Day? How will you spend your Monday? If you haven't established your own set of customs for this day, please allow me a few suggestions.

King was, among other things, a Christian minister, a person of resilient faith. The gospel that he preached taught him to believe in "the interrelatedness of all communities." Alluding to I Corinthians 13, he preached and modeled "the more excellent way of love." So, one thing you might do on Monday is give thanks for the enduring values that animated King's life, values that have improved the lives of millions in our country and around the world. And you might pray that his approach to injustice and prejudice – through nonviolence and love – might prevail in our troubled times. MLK Day should be a day of thanksgiving and prayer.

MLK Day can also be a day in which we personally imitate the behavior of this great American by reaching out to those who are different from us. King wrote that "we are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny." Recognizing our common humanity, we can through simple gestures (a shared meal, a smile, a phone call, an act of service), acknowledge that "we all have one human heart," as the poet Wordsworth once wrote.

Holidays are typically occasions for recreation. May I suggest linking your entertainment with the theme of the day – perhaps by watching a movie like *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Amistad*, or *Amazing Grace*. I highly recommend Clint Eastwood's newest triumph, *Invictus* – a film based upon a remarkable episode in the life of Nelson Mandela, the president of South Africa, soon after apartheid ended. Utterly entertaining – it's a sports drama with a great cast – the movie portrays one man's dream of racial harmony, reminiscent of Martin Luther King. Both King and Mandela were victims of injustice, yet both rose above their misfortunes to inspire reconciliation and forgiveness. They showed us that courage, faith, and hope are stronger than the darkest of human forces.

However you spend your holiday, I hope you will remember King's dream of a just society, inspired by the words of Isaiah and Jesus, who came "to proclaim release to the captives... to let the oppressed go free..." (Luke 4:18).

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