

January 18: Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday Observed

When I think of the brief and intense life of Dr. Martin Luther King, I remember this haunting little verse by Edna St. Vincent Millay:

"My candle burns at both ends;
It will not last the night;
But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends –
It gives a lovely light!"

He was not yet 40, in the prime of his life, when a hired assassin gunned him down in Memphis, TN. They intended to be rid of this trouble-maker, this disturber of the peace, who dared to question and threaten our traditional way of life. Kill the leader and the movement will die. So, they killed him. And, he was not yet 40 years old.

But what a terrible miscalculation they made. He would not stay dead. He became more powerful in death than in life. His dream bloomed into a reality that surpassed even the most hopeful expectation anyone had if he had lived. He has returned like "Banquo's Ghost" to haunt all the banquets of racism. There is a sense in which the death of Martin Luther King did for the Civil Rights movement what the death of Jesus did for Christianity.

Martin Luther King, Jr. is more alive today than ever before. Hundreds of thousands of people across this nation will meet and march this week to celebrate his life and commit themselves to the ideals for which he lived and died. His birthday has become a national holiday. Big cities and little towns all over the nation have schools and streets and avenues and boulevards and expressways named after him.

May we remember the principles by which he called us to respect and fulfil.

**Come, Worship
Stay, Learn
God, Serve**