

World & Nation

A quarter-century later, King's dream still a dream

By Laurie Hansen

WASHINGTON (NC) — The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., in a famous speech delivered 25 years ago, said he had a dream that his four children would one day live in a nation where they would "not be judged by the color of their skin but the content of their character."

A quarter of a century later, as the United States observes Martin Luther King day on Jan. 16, that dream is still only a dream.

"There is no question that racial prejudice and bigotry are still part of the national fabric," observed Auxiliary Bishop John H. Ricard of Baltimore, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Black Catholics.

Even in workplaces and the "few" neighborhoods that have integrated since the 1960s, most friendships between blacks and whites are no more than "9-to-5 relationships," said Beverly Carroll, executive director of the U.S. Catholic bishops' Secretariat for Black Catholics.

And the "reality of the job market" both within and outside the church, she said, is that "most black people are locked in low-level jobs."

Without referring to Dr. King's words or even the U.S. black experience, Pope John Paul II spoke of a similar dream in his annual World Day of Peace Message for 1989, titled "To Build Peace, Respect Minorities."

The message was released by the Vatican Dec. 9, for the World Day of Peace, which was celebrated Jan. 1.

"The unity of the human family," he said, "requires that the whole of humanity, beyond its ethnic, national, cultural and religious differences, should form a community that is free of discrimination between peoples and that strives for reciprocal solidarity."

But, he said, such is often not the case. Many minorities not given the chance to fully participate in society "find themselves in situations of suffering and distress," he said.

This, in turn, the pope said, can lead them to

"passive resignation or to unrest and even rebellion." Neither path furthers the cause of peace, he said.

Dr. King's commitment to finding a path between passivity and violence led to institutional and legal changes in the "very oppressive apartheid system of the South ... but unfortunately the more subtle, intangible" forces keeping many blacks in poverty have not been addressed, said Bishop Ricard, one of the nation's 13 black bishops.

Racial prejudice today, he said, is apparent in the "nation's lack of commitment to housing ... abandonment of civil rights ... and decision to balance the books on the backs of children and the poor."

A group of national race and urban affairs specialists who met in Racine, Wis., last February would agree with the bishop. Widening the racial gulf today, their report said, are "quiet riots," in the form of unemployment, poverty, housing and school segregation and crime.

The plight of poor, inner-city blacks, the report said, is more dismal now than 20 years ago.

The number of blacks living below the poverty level rose to 9.7 million in 1987, according to U.S. Census Bureau statistics. Per capita income for blacks in 1987 was \$7,500, compared to \$13,030 for whites.

Bishop Ricard said he blamed national leaders for setting a tone that "gives permission for bigotry and a take-care-of-self-first mentality," and has led to a resurgence of public examples of racial prejudice.

News reports of increased racial violence on college campuses and tragedies like the 1986 Howard Beach incident — in which three black men passing through a white New York neighborhood were attacked by white youths — show what happens when civil rights is placed on the

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In this 1963 photo, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered a stirring speech to close ceremonies at the Lincoln Memorial during the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

AP Wide World Photos

Cardinal announces 31 parishes will close

DETROIT (NC) — Ending three months of uncertainty over a controversial parish reorganization plan, Cardinal Edmund C. Szoka of Detroit announced Jan. 8 that 31 Detroit parishes will close and that 25 others will be given a year to "reach viability" or close.

Two of the 31 parishes will reopen as one combined parish with a new name. Members of the other parishes being closed will be absorbed into existing parishes.

The cardinal disclosed his final decisions to pastors of the affected churches in private meetings before he made his formal announcement in a Sunday afternoon press conference Jan. 8.

Pastors were given permission to tell their parishioners during weekend Masses.

Cardinal Szoka said resources were not available to operate a total of 112 parishes in Detroit and the enclaves of Hamtramck and Highland Park. Of the 82 remaining, 25 were deemed "questionably viable."

Each of those, he said, has until Dec. 31 "to demonstrate its ability to make genuine progress toward viability" in the areas of worship, spiritual and religious formation, evangelization,

service, parish staff, organizations and parish property. Periodic performance reviews are planned for these parishes.

"Can they do it? I honestly don't know," the cardinal said during the press conference. "But it does appear reasonable to hope that they can, and they certainly have my encouragement, my cooperation and my prayers that they will."

Cardinal Szoka said the decisions that have been made would naturally cause disappointment and that he personally shared in a "common sorrow and sadness" over any parish closing. But, he said, the resources "are not there" to keep them all open.

Cardinal Szoka said the church of Detroit was committed to "a strong, permanent presence in the city" as evidenced, he said, by maintaining its Sacred Heart Seminary there.

He also called for "a stirring up of baptismal waters" of Hispanics and blacks, and said the emergence of black and Hispanic lay leadership was essential.

Archdiocesan spokesman Jay Berman told *The Michigan Catholic*, Detroit archdiocesan paper, that church officials will work with the

parishes slated to close, in efforts to preserve their sacramental records, to physically close the church and to develop "more kinds of ministries for the city."

Parishes are expected to close by June 30, when parish priests will be reassigned. Berman said he did not know how many parish staff members would be affected by the closings, but said the archdiocesan Office for the Church in the City would assist in their placement elsewhere.

In December the office began inspecting the parish buildings and studying social programs offered by the city parishes.

"It's not to the cardinal's liking to even discuss the closing of parishes," Berman said. "But the city church has to lean into the future, instead of resting in the past. Staying with the status quo seems very conservative and not living with the reality of the day."

The reorganization plan was outlined Sept. 28 during an archdiocese-wide telebriefing releasing the preliminary recommendations of two archdiocesan committees, the Urban Advisory

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UPI-NC News

Pat Skelley (left) and Bea Stevenson embrace during Mass at St. Anthony's Church in Detroit after hearing that their parish will remain open for at least another year.

Pro-life activists disappointed by surgeon general's letter

WASHINGTON (NC) — Preparing to mark the anniversary of legalized abortion nationwide, pro-lifers were heartened by a Jan. 9 Supreme Court decision to consider a Missouri law restricting abortion, but were disappointed with a statement issued the same day by U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop.

Pro-life and church sources welcomed the Supreme Court's decision to consider the Missouri law, which declares that life begins at conception, bans abortions at public hospitals, prohibits public funding of abortions and adds other restrictions.

But pro-lifers were disappointed when Koop, who opposes abortion, sent a letter to President Reagan saying that Koop would not issue a long-awaited study on the mental and physical health effects of abortion on women because the evidence on any such effects was inconclusive.

Abortion opponents scheduled their annual March for Life in Washington for Jan. 23 to mark the anniversary of the Jan. 22, 1973, Supreme Court *Roe vs. Wade* decision legalizing abortion.

March for Life invited George Bush, who is to be sworn in as president three days before the

march, to address the crowd. Nellie J. Gray, president of the march, said that as of Jan. 6 she had not received a reply. For the past several years, President Reagan has addressed the March for Life crowd via a telephone hookup from the White House.

In conjunction with the March for Life, women who have had abortions planned a "Rachel's Rescue" at an unidentified Washington-area abortion clinic Jan. 23 in hopes of preventing women from entering the clinic.

Kathleen Kelly, coordinator of the rescue, said she and the other women who have had abortions will wear black armbands to symbolize their loss and their hope to save others from what she called the violence of abortion.

In the surgeon general's letter to President Reagan, Koop said that despite "diligent review" by public and private health organizations "the scientific studies do not provide conclusive data about the health effects of abortion on women."

In 1987, Reagan ordered Koop to prepare a comprehensive medical report on abortion's effects on women.

Gray said Koop has "totally lost touch with women who have been exploited by abortion.... I don't know why he wasn't able to find the truly anguished souls we hear from."

David Reardon, a researcher and author of "Aborted Women: Silent No More," said his studies of women who have had abortions indicated that serious problems often do not begin for one to five years after the abortion.

He said most available evidence shows at least 20 percent and as many as 70 to 80 percent of women who have abortions suffer effects such as guilt, loneliness, alcoholism, drug abuse, sexual dysfunction and suicidal tendencies.

Reardon said he hoped Koop would take the lead in demanding that additional, long-term research begin immediately.

A spokeswoman for the Washington-based National Abortion Rights Action League said Jan. 10 that Koop's decision "is evidence of something the pro-choice community has long known: that the anti-abortion movement cannot support its specious claim that a safe, legal abortion causes physical or emotional harm."

Priest praises 'czar,' urges rehabilitation

By Tracy Early

NEW YORK (NC)

President-elect George Bush's nominee for "drug czar" has the ability to do the job, but should understand that a heavy-handed approach to the drug problem will not work, said a New York priest who heads a drug rehabilitation agency.



Bush announced Jan. 12 that he would nominate former Education Secretary William J. Bennett to the cabinet-level position of director of the new White House Office of National Drug Control Policy.

Monsignor William B. O'Brien, president of the rehabilitation agency Daytop Village, said in a Jan. 13 telephone interview that he did not know Bennett personally, but considered him "brilliant" and "decisive."

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