



## Invocation at 2010 Martin Luther King Jr. Parade

*Denver, Colorado (January 18, 2010)*

We're here to remember a man of compassion who understood the great human dignity that links all people together across borders and cultures. So it's fitting that as we remember Dr. King, we should also remember the suffering people of Haiti who need our prayers and financial support so desperately.

Before coming here today I made a list of the documents from our country's past that helped to shape my thinking as a citizen and as an adult. It's a short list, but a distinguished one: The Declaration of Independence; the Gettysburg Address; John Kennedy's inaugural address. And Dr. Martin Luther King's Letter from Birmingham Jail.

Two lines from Dr. King's letter have always stayed with me. The first is this: "Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." And the second line is this: "I must confess that I am not afraid of the word 'tension.' I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth."

Like Dorothy Day, who's another one of my heroes, Dr. King had a heart formed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He knew that nonviolent resistance to evil is not a sign of weakness, but of strength. It's an expression of Christian love, and it demands two things: trust in the goodness and justice of God; and the courage to pursue that justice no matter what the personal cost. We often pay a price for preaching the truth about human dignity, and Dr. King paid the full cost for his extraordinary life of witness.

But the legacy of Dr. King's sacrifice has passed into the soul of our nation -- and all of us who call ourselves Americans are better and richer because of his life and struggles. Remembering that is why events like today are so important. So let's settle our hearts for a moment in prayer:

*Father in heaven,*

*Thank you for the life and witness of Dr. Martin Luther King. Help us to make his courage our own. Make us impatient with evil, but forgiving with those who are misled by it. Make us hungry for justice, firm in pursuing it and strong in the struggle to create a more humane world; but also guide our words with your mercy, and rule our actions with your love.*

*Bless all of us who have gathered here today to honor the life of Dr. King. Make us worthy of his legacy; help us to remember - as he did -- our discipleship as your sons and daughters. Fill us with the holy confidence of your presence, now and forever. And open our hearts, as you opened Dr. King's, to help those who suffer injustice here in our own community, in tragedies like Haiti, and everywhere the dignity of the human person is oppressed.*

*Amen.*