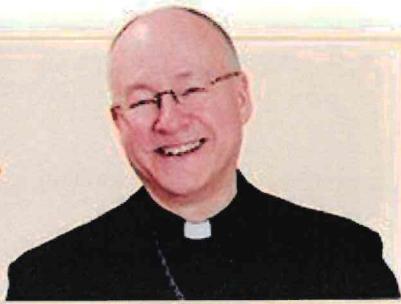


THE *Branches*

BY: ARCHBISHOP JEFFREY S. GROB



Why are you downcast, my soul? Why do you groan within me? Wait for God, for I shall again praise him, my savior and my God. (Psalm 43:5)

January 20, 2026

Hello Everyone —

Last Saturday, I had the privilege of participating in the 35th Annual Memorial Prayer Service in honor of the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at All Saints Catholic Church in Milwaukee. It was a snowy day, the kind of weather that would put off your average person from venturing out. But the church was full — undaunted and uninhibited — brave souls desirous of keeping a dream alive — and to witness to the truth of human dignity regardless of how it is packaged.

And as I stated then and reiterate here: but as the old saying goes: the more things change, the more they stay the same. We realize that some shifts have taken place — and a lot of window dressing has been updated. But sadly, we also know that too many fundamental realities and patterns of being and action remain unaltered. A darkness seethes just below the surface — and all too frequently bubbles up to rear its ugly head.

In the days before the memorial service, I had the opportunity to revisit the book “**Strength to Love**.” It is a collection of Dr. King’s sermons, published in 1963.

Thematically speaking, the sermons reflect Dr. King’s deep understanding for the need of *agape*, i.e., a radical love that is aimed towards ensuring the well-being of others lived on the deepest level. King believed in a better world, but in order to attain his vision he understood that we must first face our fears and then master these fears through courage, love and faith. He preached of a courage that all Christians should show in their nonviolent stand against segregation, a particular evil of his day. Dr. King believed that all people could possess this strength and courage for we are all made in the image of God. This courage is the strength to hope for better days, the strength to have faith in the Lord, and most of all the strength to love all of God’s children no matter the color of their skin. Dr. King’s dream is no less relevant today.

And as I thumbed through the sermons, my eyes fell on the following passage from “Strength to Love” that addresses one of the greatest challenges facing all of us at the current time:

We must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. Whoever is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love. It is impossible even to begin the act of loving someone who hurt us without the prior acceptance of the necessity — over and over again — of forgiving those who inflict evil and injury upon us.

Forgiveness does not mean ignoring what has been done or putting a false label on an evil act. It means, rather, that the evil act no longer remains as a barrier to the relationship. Forgiveness is a catalyst creating the atmosphere necessary for a fresh start and a new beginning.

Elsewhere, I found the following prayer written by Dr. King. I leave it with you for your use.

Thou Eternal God, out of whose absolute power and infinite intelligence the whole universe has come into being, we humbly confess that we have not loved thee with our hearts, souls and minds, and we have not loved our neighbors as Christ loved us.

We have all too often lived by our own selfish impulses rather than by the life of sacrificial love as revealed by Christ. We often give in order to receive. We love our friends and hate our enemies. We go the first mile but dare not travel the second. We forgive but dare not forget.

And so as we look within ourselves, we are confronted with the appalling fact that the history of our lives is the history of an eternal revolt against you. But thou, O God, have mercy upon us. Forgive us for what we could have been but failed to be. Give us the intelligence to know your will. Give us the courage to do your will. Give us the devotion to love your will.

In the name and spirit of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

As I do for you, please pray for me,

*Most Reverend Jeffrey S. Grob
Archbishop of Milwaukee*

