

April 26, 2020 | Third Sunday of Easter (A)

[ACTS 2:42-47](#)

[PS 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24](#)

[1 PT 1:3-9](#)

[JN 20:19-31](#)

By Br. Steve Herro, O. Praem.

I write in the second week of my state's "Safer at Home" policy; the original endpoint of the policy is April 25. I wonder if Wisconsinites will be one day free of isolation on the Third Sunday of Easter. I also write this on the 52nd anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

In the First Reading, Acts of the Apostles 2: 14, 22-33, Peter delivers a long speech about the life, death, and significance of Jesus. Jesus, the rabbi and prophet who bore the trial and death of a common criminal, is publicly memorialized a period of days after his life. In a similar way, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who was threatened by thugs countless times, imprisoned, and finally assassinated, had his detractors while he taught, organized, and preached for ten years in the mid 20th century, but today, we acknowledge him as one of the most prophetic voices in the history of the United States (and if you want to argue that distinction, reread Pope Francis' speech to the U.S. Congress and the rest of the world on September 24th, 2015).

Justice-speaking prophets are often opposed during their lives. It behooves all of us to remember the lives and actions of such spokespersons after they die. Though humans might have behaved inappropriately by persecuting and even killing such leaders, our task remains to continue the study and celebration of such prophets' lives, just as King's family and his successors in the Civil Rights movement continued to carry his mantle after he died. Just as Peter and the first disciples did not allow the legacy of Jesus to die, it is our responsibility to advance the legacy of 20th and 21st-century prophets of justice, such as King, Dorothy Day, Cesar Chavez, and Saint Oscar Romero, in order to advance justice and peace for decades beyond their lives.

Maybe we are doing our small part at St. Norbert Abbey to advance the legacy of such prophets years beyond their deaths. For today, April 4, our morning prayer presider read not only of the anniversary of the April 4, 1922 death of Norbertine Br. Frederick Kildonk, but also reminded us of King's own passing on this day in 1968. Though I sometimes feel that my own religious community is not adequately advancing the legacy of justice seeking prophets during and after their lives, I laud the Norbertine who had the foresight to add the reference to King in our own Norbertine necrology.

My final word for this Sunday, also derived from the words and actions of Peter in the First Reading. Followers of justice are not into “gotcha-ism.” Though Peter was addressing successors of a group who played a direct or indirect role in the trial and death of Jesus, his teacher/master/friend, Peter did not lay blame on them or their predecessors. Peter has moved beyond vengeance to a state of acceptance and love of others; he even calls them “brothers.” Peter models a justice that moves beyond past hurts and differences and toward the attainment of the common good and kingdom of God for all of us. Peter models a justice that moves beyond past hurts and differences and toward the attainment of the common good and kingdom of God for all of us.

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