

Proclamation 6242 of January 14, 1991

Martin Luther King, Jr., Federal Holiday, 1991

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

In commemorating the anniversary of the birth of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., we celebrate the cause to which he dedicated his life. More than a struggle to end bigotry and segregation in the United States—although that alone would be ample reason to honor him—Martin Luther King's great purpose was an effort "to make real the promises of democracy."

With characteristic eloquence, Dr. King told his countrymen, "In spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this Nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed." By working to fulfill for all Americans the promise of life, liberty, and happiness expressed in the Declaration of Independence, Martin Luther King helped to bring our country closer to the ideal envisioned at its founding.

Inspiring Martin Luther King's appeals for racial equality was a strong faith—faith in Almighty God, faith in the future, and faith in the ultimate triumph of truth and justice. A gifted preacher who often quoted from Scripture, King believed that America must uphold its promise of liberty and opportunity for all because prejudice and discrimination obscure the reality that all people are made in the image of their Creator.

The faith that animated Martin Luther King's efforts to uphold the God-given dignity and worth of every individual was nurtured in him from childhood. The son of a Baptist minister, King was clearly inspired by the example of his parents and their quiet nobility and determination.

The family is still, as King once observed, "the main educational agency of mankind." Thus, we must begin with the family if we are to ensure that our children "live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." We give our children the tools needed to build a bright future when we give them love and attention and help them to develop a sense of personal responsibility and self-esteem, as well as an appreciation for the value of learning and hard work. Finally, we must instill in our children a sense of hope and higher purpose, helping them to recognize—as did Martin Luther King—the power of prayer and the rewards of basic human goodness. As Dr. King once said, "Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education. The complete education gives one not only power of concentration but worthy objectives upon which to concentrate."

Throughout his adult life, Martin Luther King concentrated on efforts to overcome bitterness and division and to fulfill the American dream for all members of our society. He taught all of us important lessons about faith, sacrifice, perseverance, and optimism. Today we recall those lessons and renew our determination to promote racial harmony and equality of opportunity in the United States.

By Public Law 98-144, the third Monday in January of each year has been designated as a legal public holiday.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE BUSH, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim Monday, January 21, 1991, as the Martin Luther King, Jr., Federal Holiday.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this fourteenth day of January, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-one, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and fifteenth.

GEORGE BUSH

Proclamation 6243 of February 1, 1991

For a National Day of Prayer, February 3, 1991

*By the President of the United States of America
A Proclamation*

As one Nation under God, we Americans are deeply mindful of both our dependence on the Almighty and our obligations as a people He has richly blessed. From our very beginnings as a Nation, we have relied upon God's strength and guidance in war and peace. Entrusted with the holy gift of freedom and allowed to prosper in its great light, we have a responsibility to serve as a beacon to the world—to use our strength and resources to help those suffering in the darkness of tyranny and repression.

Today the United States is engaged in a great struggle to uphold the principles of national sovereignty and international order and to defend the lives and liberty of innocent people. It is an armed struggle we made every possible effort to avoid through extraordinary diplomatic efforts to resolve the matter peacefully, yet—given no choice by a ruthless dictator who would wield political and economic hegemony over other nations through force and terror—it is a struggle we wage with conviction and resolve. Our cause is moral and just.

However confident of our purpose, however determined to prevail, we Americans continue to yearn for peace and for the safety of our service men and women in the Persian Gulf. With these great hopes in mind, I ask all Americans to unite in humble and contrite prayer to Almighty God. May it please our Heavenly Father to look upon this Nation, judging not our worthiness but our need, and to grant us His continued strength and guidance. May He watch over and support the courageous members of our Armed Forces, their loving families, as well as the forces of those nations that have joined the coalition to liberate Kuwait and to deter further Iraqi aggression.

Today, as we turn our hearts toward Heaven, let us also pray especially for those brave and selfless military personnel who have earned their final rest in the arms of God. Let us ask Him to strengthen and console their families, and let us also remember all those innocent civilians, wherever they may be, who have been affected by this conflict.