

Building the future on solid ground

Everyone knows the Scripture story from the Gospel of Matthew when a wise man plans to build a house. His thoughts took him to build on solid rock instead of sand. The rock was meticulously chosen, because that wise man wanted a strong future in his house.

This story is a good one to ponder at the dawn of a new year. Surely all of us want a future filled with all good things, but as life will have it, there will be storms and winds that buffet our lives and our households. So what preparations are needed to build a future that can weather storms as well as the thunder and lightning that often accompanies inclement weather?

With all things, our preparations for the future should be anchored in prayer. That is why we attend Watch Night Prayer Services on New Year's Eve and Mass on New Year's Day. Our lives must be rooted in God's word and the Eucharist. These are the great prayers of our lives, and our prayer should lead to intended action. Our lives, our community and our world yearn for transformation, revitalization and renewal.

Thus, we engage in a reconstruction process, building a future on solid ground - one that embraces a bold call for spiritual and social healing in the black community. We stand on a stage of history never experienced before. President-elect Barack Obama, rising out of the African-American community, will be responsible for some "heavy lifting" as he promotes in his administration a "circle for positive change." Recognizing that this hour of history was built by many who came before President-elect Obama, we remember in January the awesome social and spiritual prophet, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and the wisdom he poured out to us, bringing spiritual and social hope.

The transformation, revitalization and renewal of our community should not rest alone on the shoulders of our new president, but on all of us. This call to "increase our engagement for "social and spiritual healing" will happen on several levels, some within our parishes, some within the neighborhoods that we reside in and some within social groups in which we participate. On Jan. 19, the Office of African American Catholic Ministries will join New All Saints, St. Cecilia, Immaculate

Conception, St. Gregory the Great and St. Edward churches for a celebration remembering Dr. King on the eve of the inauguration of President Barack H. Obama. The celebration will be in the context of Mass; the presider will be Auxiliary Bishop Denis J. Madden, and the homilist will be Father Donald A. Sterling, pastor of New All Saints. This celebration will be held on Monday, Jan. 19 at 7 p.m. at New All Saints (Liberty Heights Avenue). Follow-up initiatives to this celebration to encourage social change and renewal will include the establishment of a reading and wisdom circle. More to come on these efforts to which all are invited.

Other celebrations include a job fair during the day at St. Frances Academy Community Center led by Ralph E. Moore. (Mr. Moore will provide an article explaining specifics on this initiative in our next column.) I hear, too, that St. Bernardine will also go down in prayer on this same day, Jan. 19. The Harambee Outreach to Youth has also picked up the mantle of encouraging spiritual and social renewal through the annual retreat to be held from Jan. 18-20. For more information about this retreat contact Howard Roberts, coordinator of Harambee, at 410-258-6920 .

As we begin this new year, let's take an active role in building up our community and our church. Let's build our house on solid rock instead of sinking sand. Let's have a healthy start, a spiritual start, a moral and ethical start and a smart and just start for the new year, remembering that Christ calls us each day to "go out and transform the world ... Behold, I am with you always, until the end of the world."

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