

Here comes the sun ... across the mountaintop

A country preacher once reminded us that, "Everything in the universe moves, when there is hope in the air." The observation seems true as we begin 2009 with the inauguration of the first African-American president of the United States.

The irony is not lost on me that the national holiday honoring Martin Luther King Jr. will be the day before Inauguration Day. Had he lived, we would be celebrating Martin's 80th birthday - a special day preceding another one.

What also strikes me is the cosmic connections between Barack Obama and Martin Luther King: the biblical 40 years between the death of one and the election of the other; the broad, charismatic appeal of the two; the great sense of urgency they shared; and the certainty of their visions.

When King died in Memphis, Tenn., he was focused on economic justice. As Barack Obama assumes the office of president, he is called to deal with a nation in economic decline. He knows that he cannot fix the economy without addressing the needs of the poorest of the unemployed among others.

But in spite of the tough times, one cannot help but feel hopeful. After nearly a decade of difficult days - two wars, Hurricane Katrina and economic turmoil at home and worldwide - it looks as if we are in for some quality leadership - thoughtful, wise, bold and focused on the needs of the many versus the few. President Obama, however, will not be able to effect much needed changes alone. Clearly, as he has stated so eloquently, he needs the American citizenry with him. His election was a call to action, a call to service. If he is to succeed, we must answer that call with our time, our energy and/or our dollars.

If you are looking for a service opportunity, please join us at St. Frances Academy Community Center located at 501 E. Chase St. in Baltimore for the seventh annual Job Fair (Jan. 19 starting at 8:30 a.m.). It is actually not the traditional job fair. Jobseekers, volunteers, employers and job readiness/placement program

representatives are welcome. We offer breakfast to all and lunch in midday. Morning classes in resume writing, interviewing skills and sharpening of attitudes and behaviors to be successful in the workplace are conducted for the jobseekers by knowledgeable, experienced volunteers.

Bishop Denis Madden, a vicar for the Archdiocese of Baltimore, will lead jobseekers and service providers in prayer before lunch. Volunteers are invited to be anything from a job search coach (we call them good neighbors) to a prayer partner for the day to encourage success to those seeking work. If you are interested, call 410-539-5794, ext. 30 or 28 for details.

In his last public speech, Martin Luther King prophesied victory over injustice in his vision statement: "We've got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been to the mountaintop ... I just want to do God's will. And he's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people will get to the promised land."

His prediction is echoed in the election night speech of Barack Obama decades later: "The road ahead will be long. Our climb will be steep. We may not get there in one year or even one term, but America - I have never been more hopeful than I am tonight that we will get there. I promise you - we as a people will get there."

Rejoice: a prophet walks among us again! Walk with him.

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