



Statement from the Black Catholic Theological Symposium on the Death of Rev. Jesse Jackson, Sr.

The Black Catholic Theological Symposium joins the nation and the global community in mourning the death of the Reverend Jesse Louis Jackson, Sr., pastor, prophet, and tireless advocate for justice. We give thanks to God for a life poured out in service to the least of these and in steadfast witness to the dignity of Black life.

Formed in the crucible of the modern Civil Rights Movement and mentored by the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Rev. Jackson carried forward a prophetic tradition deeply resonant with the biblical witness and the social teaching of the Catholic Church. His leadership in organizations such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Rainbow PUSH Coalition embodied a theology of public engagement—one that refused to separate faith from political responsibility or prayer from protest.

Though not Catholic, Rev. Jackson's life and ministry profoundly intersected with the mission of Black Catholics in the United States. His insistence that America live up to its professed ideals mirrors the Church's own call to be both sacrament and servant in the world. His advocacy for voting rights, economic justice, labor dignity, educational access, and international human rights echoed core principles of Catholic social doctrine: the inviolable dignity of the human person, the preferential option for the poor, solidarity, and the pursuit of the common good.

For Black Catholic theologians, Rev. Jackson's public witness also underscores a deeper theological truth: that God's liberating action in history often emerges through the voices of those the world marginalizes. In a society scarred by racism and structural sin, he proclaimed hope—not as sentimentality, but as disciplined struggle. He reminded the nation that justice is not self-executing; it must be demanded, organized, and embodied.

We honor his legacy not merely with words but with renewed commitment. The work of dismantling racism within our Church and society remains unfinished. The call to build a beloved community—rooted in right relationship with God and neighbor—continues to summon us.

We pray for his family, for all who were formed by his ministry, and for a Church courageous enough to stand where he stood: alongside the poor, the excluded, and the disenfranchised.

May he rest in peace, and may his witness strengthen our resolve to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.

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