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MARCH BY CLERGY HONORS DR. KING

200 Leading Churchmen in
Procession in Memphis

By GEORGE DUGAN
Special to The New York Times

MEMPHIS, Jan. 23 — More than 200 of the nation's leading churchmen marched in solemn procession through downtown Memphis today to pay tribute to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Augmented by some 300 local residents, the procession began at the Sheraton-Peabody Hotel and ended eight blocks away in the parking lot of the Lorraine Motel, where Dr. King was assassinated last April 4.

There, in balmy, spring-like sunshine, the churchmen conducted a service of "celebration and thanksgiving for the life and work" of the slain civil rights leader.

Assembled under the balcony of Room 306, where Dr. King was standing when he was shot, the marchers sang hymns, prayed, read from the Scriptures, and listened to short

speeches of "thanksgiving and appreciation."

The procession was led by Dr. Arthur G. Flemming, president of the National Council of Churches; Metropolitan Nikodim of the Russian Orthodox Church; Dr. R. H. Edwin Espy, general secretary of the council; the Rev. Dr. Charles S. Spivey Jr., director of the council's department of social justice, and the Most Rev. Joseph Durek, Roman Catholic Bishop of Nashville.

Policy Board Meeting

Following in groups of six were representatives of the 32 Protestant and Eastern Orthodox churches affiliated with the council. Most of the churchmen were in Memphis to attend a meeting of the council's policy-making general board.

Each group was lead by a delegate carrying the banner of his church. Motorcycle policemen escorted the procession, for which the marshals were 10 members of the Invaders, a local black militant group.

Later, Coby Smith, an officer of the Invaders, told a news conference that his group was aware that the churches had a "lot of influence" and could help the Negro "if they would just get off their tails and do it."

"We want some sort of a

commitment from each church leader here," he said. "Mourning someone's death is nothing. We want tangible things like equal employment opportunities and money to run projects for the welfare of the black community."

At the Lorraine Motel service, Dr. Flemming told the churchmen that Dr. King had done more than any other man to help "close the gap between reality and idealism."

No greater tribute can be paid to Dr. King, he said, than to "dedicate our lives and our time to the causes for which he lived and died."

Abernathy Backs Bevel

Special to The New York Times

ATLANTA, Jan. 23 — The Rev. Ralph David Abernathy said today that he had confidence in the "judgment and integrity" of the Rev. James Bevel.

Mr. Bevel, an official of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, has offered to help defend James Earl Ray, who is accused of murdering Dr. King.

Mr. Abernathy, president of the conference, said that Mr. Bevel was trying to "move non-violence into a new dimension of American life."

Mr. Bevel said in Philadelphia earlier this week that he did not believe Ray was guilty.

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