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AMDG

Inauguration Eve Service, Grace St. Paul's - January 19, 2017

I'm honored to be with all of you tonight, people of faith gathered in prayer. In reflecting on what I see as the highest ideals of our country, I know that among them are prayer and service to others - We are a generous and loving people who do justice and love kindness. And we are a prayerful people - thoughtful, self reflective.

This is why the events of the past year have surprised me so. Not just the outcome of the elections, but the levels of anger, mistrust, hatred, fear, and disillusionment that were evidenced. I am saddened about the many groups who have felt exposed, scapegoated, and demonized. Especially those I love - some in my congregation, and in my own family. And it saddens me that, so many people, in their anger, and fear, and hatred, opted for even more anger, fear, and hatred. I don't know why, as faith leaders were we unable to perceive such deep negative feelings, and were we unable to respond with actions that drew others away from darkness. But, I do know that in my prayer life, if I am not actively seeking the Source of All Goodness, I will care more about being right than living right; I will be more interested about what others think of me than in doing what is right in God's eyes; I will be more concerned about being understood, rather than understanding others; and I will be more focused on removing the splinter from my neighbor's eye, than taking the log from mine. ***In short, I will seek to do my own will, rather than God's will.*** Perhaps I have been unable to see and respond to what was going on around me, because my prayer life has not been grounded in seeing the source of all love within me and within others. As I remember the many acts of justice and mercy in which I have participated over the years, some of them with many of you, I know the most meaningful and most effective actions have been those when my prayer life has been more diligent and more humble.

And so in the last months my attention has come again and again the Litany of Non-violence from the Sisters of Providence (which we all just

prayed together). I commend it to you, and copies are available in the entrance.

So, it is very fitting that we gather in prayer tonight. Because, I know that the result of authentic prayer is right action. That if I am walking honestly and *humbly* with my Creator, my response to whatever challenges are put before me will be action that is *resolute and loving*. And, I want so much that my responses to injustice and anger and fear be resolute and loving. *Not* arrogant, not self-righteous, not judgmental, not angry.

Ralph Abernathy, one of the great civil rights leaders said, "I don't know what the future may hold, but I know who holds the future." I don't know the road ahead will bring, but I imagine we'll have much work to do in the coming years as we continue to stand up for justice, to respond to hatred and violence. And, if we ground our response to the darkness of the world with the light of humble prayer, I know our actions will be righteous and will be for the good of all God's people and all of God's Creation.

Litany of Non--Violence *by the Sisters of Providence*

Provident God, aware of my own brokenness,
I ask the gift of courage to identify how and where I am
In need of conversion in order to live in
solidarity with all Earth's people.

Deliver me from the violence of superiority and disdain.
Grant me the desire, and the humility,
to listen with special care to those whose experiences
and attitudes are different from my own.

Deliver me from the violence of greed and privilege.
Grant me the desire, and the will, to live simply so
others may have their just share of Earth's resources.

Deliver me from the silence that gives
consent to abuse, war and evil.

Grant me the desire, and the courage, to risk speaking and acting for the common good.

Deliver me from the violence of irreverence, exploitation and control.

Grant me the desire, and the strength, to act responsibly within the cycle of creation.

God of love, mercy and justice.

Acknowledging my complicity in those attitudes, actions and words which perpetuate violence, I beg the grace of a non--violent heart. Amen