“Prayer in the Time of Trump”
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How do we pray now that someone whose worldview and policies are opposite to that of Catholic Social Teaching is president of the United States? Many people have made comparisons to the 1930s and the policies of Hitler. We are not there—yet. But certainly we are closer to the possibility of nuclear war than we have been for decades.

First, we pray for Donald Trump. The Quakers say that all have that of God in them—a challenge when we consider Trump. Faith tells us that he is loved by God, even as he and his policies begin to wreak havoc in the United States and around the world. He has a spiritual adviser, Paula White, who has said that Trump has accepted Christ as his Lord and savior. So we pray that we may see the fruits of the Gospel, of the Spirit of God in his life and policies.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, martyred under Hitler, refers to Psalm 50 in his Letters and Papers from Prison: “Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you and you shall glorify me.” We can pray for deliverance from the threats posed by the kind of legislation favored by Trump and his supporters: barriers between nations (the wall on the border with Mexico), exclusion of refugees, millions losing health insurance, greater pollution and increased effects of climate change, the breakdown of communication due to “fake news” and “alternative facts.”

We can pray for the strength to resist. This was seen so clearly the day after his inauguration when millions of women and men in the United States and in many countries around the world (including South Africa) sent a message of “no” to what the Trump administration wants to enact. We can resist not only by marches and signing petitions on social media, but by actions that counter Trump’s worldview. These are Gospel actions: justice and compassion for those in need, those threatened by the policies emerging from the White House, acting against the “America First” perspective by being world citizens.

We can pray for a greater sense of community in the country. The election campaign was run at 1 million decibel level. It is very difficult to talk to people who are shouting at you. We can pray for a country of “the better angels of our nature” as Abraham Lincoln said in his first inaugural address.

Our prayer must be persistent, constant and confident.