

Mayor Muriel Bowser
Executive Office of the Mayor
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

10 July 2016

Dear Madame,

In light of recent events around our country, and with concern for the promotion of human life and its dignity in our own wonderful city please know that I pray daily for your work as our mayor. Paraphrasing the words of Archbishop John Carroll (1735-1815), first Catholic Archbishop of the United States,

Let the light of Thy divine wisdom direct the deliberations of Congress, and shine forth in all the proceedings and laws framed for our rule and government, so that they may tend to the preservation of peace, the promotion of national happiness, the increase of industry, sobriety, and useful knowledge; and may perpetuate to us the blessing of equal liberty.

I pray for her excellency, the mayor of this District, for the members of the City Council, for all judges, magistrates, and other officers who are appointed to guard our political welfare, that they may be enabled, by Thy powerful protection, to discharge the duties of their respective stations with honesty and ability.¹

Assured of these prayers, I hope, Madame Mayor, that you will consider a few thoughts from one of your constituents as you guide our city in the midst of challenging times:

First - that in deliberations about city policy attention always be directed firstly to the needs of our most disadvantaged fellow citizens: the materially poor, the uneducated, those suffering from constant mental/physical illness, those trapped by circumstance in dangerous living conditions, the unborn and the elderly. We Catholics describe this as a preferential option for the poor, flowing from our belief in the universal destination of human goods.² I would be edified to know that my city leaders act with that option always in mind.

Second - following the lead of Alexis de Tocqueville - an early commentator on American democracy; I believe that in the pursuit of the general welfare, with an eye toward that preferential option for the poor, solutions should focus not only on city policy, but primarily on the promotion of civil society and faith-based initiatives. I firmly believe that the efforts of government authority are always improved and indeed magnified when associations of citizen-volunteers, bound to service by solidarity³, take the lead on improving the lives of others. To this end, I hold up the excellent example of:

¹ Archbishop John Carroll, *A Prayer for Government*, 10 Nov. 1791

² Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2005. Paragraphs: 182, 449.

³ *Ibid.*, 192.

- Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington,
- The “So Others Might Eat” Program,
- The “Gabriel Network” for mothers in need, and
- The Capitol Hill Village.⁴

Finally - I ask you to work with our city and Congressional leaders to eliminate the possibility of gun violence by making our capitol city a hand/assault-weapon-free zone. Surely the Founders did not intend our Constitution’s Second Amendment to serve as a license for the unchecked growth of violence in our streets. I would support any efforts on your part to promote a reading of the Amendment that eliminates gun-related deaths and intimidation from our home.

There is so much to be done, but I hope that these humble suggestions may be a starting point and a support to you in your good efforts. "All things good on this Earth flow into the City, because of the City's greatness," Pericles of Athens is reported to have said. Surely from such wealth we can find the resources we need to give all our citizens a chance at the real pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness. Many thanks for your kind attention.

Yours Sincerely,

Rev. Vincent J. De Rosa
Parochial Vicar
St. Peter Catholic Church, Capitol Hill

⁴ www.catholiccharitiesdc.org www.some.org www.gabrielnetwork.org www.capitolhillvillage.org