

INAUGURATION of JOSEPH R. BIDEN, JR.

INVOCATION

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by

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Gracious and merciful God, at this sacred time we come before you in need--indeed on our knees. But we come still more with hope, and with our eyes raised anew to the vision of a “more perfect union” in our land, a union of all our citizens to “promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.”ⁱ We are a people of many races, creeds and colors, national backgrounds, cultures and styles—now far more numerous and on land much vaster than when Archbishop John Carroll wrote his prayer for the inauguration of George Washington two-hundred-and-thirty-two years ago. Archbishop Carroll prayed that you, O Creator of all, would “assist with your Holy Spirit of counsel and fortitude the President of these United States, that his administration may be conducted in righteousness, and be eminently useful to your people.”ⁱⁱ

Today we confess our past failures to live according to our vision of equality, inclusion and freedom for all. Yet we resolutely commit still more now to renewing the vision, to caring for one another in word and deed, especially the least fortunate among us, and so becoming a light the world can look to. There is a power in each and every one of us that lives by turning to every other one of us, a thrust of the spirit to cherish and care and

stand by others, and above all those most in need. It is called love, and its path is to give ever more of itself. Today it is called American patriotism, born not of power and privilege but of care for the common good—“with malice toward none and with charity for all.”ⁱⁱⁱ

For our new President we beg of you the wisdom Solomon sought when he knelt before you and prayed for “an understanding heart so that I can govern your people and know the difference between right and wrong.”^{iv} We trust in the counsel of the Letter of James: “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.”^v

Pope Francis has reminded us “how important it is to dream together....By ourselves,” he wrote, “we risk seeing mirages, things that are not there. Dreams, on the other hand, are built together.”^{vi} Be with us, Holy Mystery of Love, as we dream together. Help us under our new President to reconcile the people of our land, restore our dream, and invest it with peace and justice and the joy that is the overflow of love.^{vii}

To the glory of your Name forever.

Amen.

ⁱ Preamble to the Constitution of the United States

ⁱⁱ Peter Guilday, “The Life and Times of John Carroll, Archbishop of Baltimore (1735-1815),” New York: Encyclopedia Press, 1922.

ⁱⁱⁱ Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address

^{iv} I Kings 3.9; cf. Ps 119.34

^v James 1.5

^{vi} “Fratelli tutti,” No. 8

^{vii} Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, IIa-IIa, Q. 28