



Mayor's Inauguration Eve Interfaith Service

Old Mission Dolores
Thursday, January 7, 2016

Remarks by Michael G. Pappas, Executive Director

Each morning, in the faith tradition in which I was raised, we prayed, "O Lord, save your people and bless your inheritance, strengthen our public authorities in every good deed..." This ancient prayer, derived from the ninth verse of the 28th psalm, reveals a long-standing liturgical tradition, common to all faiths, the call to pray for those who lead us.

Tonight, on the eve of your inauguration, as you embark upon your second term as Mayor of this City of Saint Francis, San Francisco's religious leaders gather in this historic and sacred space to offer up prayers for you and our City.

We, who have prayed, sang, read and reflected in this service are no strangers to you, Mr. Mayor. We are representatives of the 800 congregations in our City, their respective judicatories, religious based educational and healthcare institutions and the social service agencies that provide the safety net for San Francisco's most vulnerable residents. We are co-workers with you in a common mission to care for the least of our brethren.

Our collaborative work to provide shelter to the homeless during the most inclement months of the year, fund and serve meals at the Navigation Center and tirelessly work to identify and develop properties owned by congregations and religious institutions to house those who provide essential services in our City at a time when affordable housing is so scarce is, in fact, our prayers expressed in action.

But there is something else, something more profound, perhaps something more useful that we have to offer. In times when the frenetic noise and pressure of special interests seems to cloud rational judgment and the capacity for civil discourse in the public square, as advocates for social justice, civil and human rights, we will offer to you a prophetic voice. We will invite you to reflect upon the words of this evening, to take time for silent meditation, to be discerning, to follow your heart and conscience and to stand firm in your convictions.

These are the gifts that we offer to you at the dawn of this new beginning in your public service Mr. Mayor. We ask that you accept them in the spirit of love in which they are offered.

But there are yet more gifts to come! At this time, Mayor Lee, we would invite you to come forward and accept what we hope will be a particularly welcome gift from our Founder and Past Chair Rita R. Semel.