

May 2017

The measure of love

What strikes you most when you read the words of Jesus concerning the “signs of the end of the age”? (Matthew 24:3-14). Do you look outwards to world events and the catastrophes, wars and other shakings that he announced? Jesus gave yet another sign: *“Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold.”* (v.12). Here “agape” love is meant, which is selfless and also loves enemies. Jesus told us to love our enemies, to pray for them, to bless them and to love one another. Watchmen’s prayer needs this kind of love. We can always pray without love, with anxiety in our hearts or with grievances against leaders for whom God’s commands often are no longer a standard to live by. How is it with our hearts when we pray? Let us ask that the Lord will continually fill us with more of His love even before we begin to pray. -RS-

BAMF – an agency under pressure

In the autumn of 2015 the “Federal Agency for Migrants and Refugees” (“BAMF” in German) had to speed up its working practices to handle the many new applications for asylum. Within a few months the work force “exploded” from 2000 to 8000. They employed everyone who applied. The training was shortened from six months to one (!). And straight away a full-time job. But instead of a thorough handling of two cases per day, five cases per day were expected. Otherwise possible dismissal. Pressure. Anxiety. Depression. The lives of hundreds of thousands in their hands. “Deportation” the order of the day.

The decision by the agency to separate the *interviewers* (who question applicants and write a report) from the *decision makers* (who only read the interviewer’s report and can ask no questions) had the most serious consequences. The “quality control” of decisions that was introduced by the agency is only applied in isolated cases, if at all.

Those whose application is rejected still have the right to make an appeal through a lawyer. Every day hundreds of appeals arrive at the administrative court. Mountains of files have been moved to vacant courts. There are too few specialised lawyers who know the full legal position of the government – but the judges meet with the applicant before making a final decision and can ask questions. It can however take years before an application is recognised.

Prayer:

- **For the BAMF to be committed to justice for asylum seekers and resist idealistic political requirements (as in election campaign promises!). (Psalm 11:7)**
- **Pray for sound reasoning by the judges when making their final decisions. (Psalm 143:10)**
- **For a quick recognition of applications from the many Christian refugees. (Deuteronomy 10:17-18)** -OS-

Protection of the family

Under the leadership of Martin Schultz the SPD (socialist party) is going into the national election campaign on a “marriage for all” platform with the support of the Greens

and the Left. They present the equal treatment of same-sex partnerships and marriages between a man and woman as an issue of fairness and justice; and to differentiate these partnerships is discrimination. The legal consequences would be equal adoption rights. The CDU/CSU (centre-right union) is split on this issue and is now being put under pressure by the SPD as its grand coalition partner to withdraw its opposition to the proposed legislation.

The state of North-Rhine-Westphalia has introduced a bill in the German parliament’s “upper house” for the embedding of children’s rights in the Federal Constitution. Pursuant to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the “principle of the well-being child” and the “right to participation and consideration” has to be taken into account. The state shall respect, protect and promote the rights and welfare of the child. According to this, the right of the state to look after children’s interests would be set alongside the basic, established, natural parental rights and responsibilities. The state authorities are already watching the behaviour parents according to Art.6 of German Basic Law and take action when they fail to meet its conditions.

If children’s rights are made equal to the rights of parents, this could, among other things, clear the way towards the obligatory use of child day-care centres, which is being pushed forward by the SPD, also against the will of the parents.

Prayer:

- **Proclaim the God-given order for marriage and family life. (Genesis 1:27ff)**
- **Blessing and empowerment of parents for their duties in raising their children. (Deuteronomy 5:16)**
- **Protection of parents and children from state interference. (Psalm 127:3-5)** -KH-

Fatherhood – a calling and life style for Germany

God gives gifts and callings not only to individuals but also to nations. One of God’s callings for our nation is to live a fatherhood life-style and to be a father nation which will also be a blessing to the surrounding nations. We must first rediscover this calling at a deeper level as a nation after having mishandled and misused it for so long. A real father promotes a sense of identity and supports a growing maturity. He does not force his opinion on others with his superior authority. Such a fatherhood life-style can be effective in all areas of our society.

One of the sections of society where fatherhood is lacking is the world of business and work. Let us pray that the principle of fatherly leadership will be recognised, taught and practised in the areas of management and training. If managers and trainers behave and act in a fatherly way, a potential will be released in those being trained and in the workers that can have a positive influence not only on their personal lives but also on the company and business, and on our country. People can only really live the fatherhood life-style to its fullest extent when they have a relationship with God as their heavenly father. And it has pleased God to

divinely install fatherhood as a calling into our nation.

Prayer:

- **Pray for people who behave and act in a fatherly manner to be in leadership positions and in the training centres. (James 1:17)**
- **That the fatherhood life-style will be rediscovered and lived in all areas of society.**
- **That more and more people in leadership positions will know the “Father of all fatherhood” and live and lead in His love and power. (Ephesians 3:14-19)** -TF-

Anti-Semitism in Germany

Seventy years after the end of the Holocaust, a not insignificant number in the German population still harbour resentments against the Jews. Many Jews no longer feel safe in Germany. When they reveal that they are Jewish, they are in danger of provocation, hostility and physical threats, on the street, at the work place, in school playgrounds. Anti-Semitism has many faces and is not only to be associated with the extreme right-wing or left-wing scene. Under the guise of harsh criticism of Israel, it is reaching the heart of our society and is increasingly being expressed openly. In migrant communities there is also a hatred for Jews, motivated by Islam, which has already been demonstrated in criminal acts by Islamic young people against Jews and Jewish properties. In schools with a high number of students with Turkish or Arab backgrounds, teachers often hear anti-Jewish comments when they talk about the Mid-East conflict or the Holocaust. New ideas and concepts are needed in order to prepare teachers to deal effectively with this situation. There is also anti-Semitism on the part of Christians, which is based on “replacement theology” (the church is the new Israel, replacing his chosen people Israel) and which manifests itself in rejection, lack of interest and indifference towards the Israel of today.

Prayer

- **That all forms of hidden anti-Semitism come into the light and Jewish life will be made to feel welcome in Germany. (Isaiah 54:17)**
- **For new concepts in schools, to make students with an Islamic migrant background aware of anti-Semitic attitudes and behaviour.**
- **That churches will be set free from indifference to the Jewish people and take up their Biblical mandate to support and bless the people of Israel. (Genesis 12:3; Romans 11:11-12)** -AS-

Threat to democracy

It is of serious concern when politicians are hounded out of office with hate mails and malicious accusations. Elected officials – mostly local politicians – are increasingly finding themselves threatened in one way or another. They are bombarded with the most scurrilous hate mails, threatened with murder, party premises are broken into, cars set on fire – they are pursued and harassed by political “stalkers”. And when they do not resign, they are threatened with attacks on their family, especially their children. Politicians who speak out locally for refugees in particular have come under enormous pressure since the summer of 2015.

AfD and NPD politicians (right-wing/nationalist) are also constantly the target of hate mails and attacks, and the majority of attacks, up to two thirds, come from the right-wing extremist camp. German law offers little protection to politicians under threat. The culprits must be identified by name. Announcements in the press and media lead nowhere. They often use the “Darknet” with protected access, multiple servers, dozens of e-mail addresses and alternating IP-addresses to conceal their real identity. Several city mayors and district administrators have already resigned because of threats. In Bocholt a local party conference had to be cancelled.

Prayer:

- **We speak words of blessing especially over locally elected officials and politicians – and against all threats and accusations. (1 Peter 3:9)**
- **Pray for the protection of democracy from the devastating consequences of hate. (Matthew 6:13)**
- **That threatened politicians will find help and support from many quarters. (Numbers 6:24-26)** -RS-

Prayer by town, country and river

In 2011 a small team of young people (19-24 years old) fulfilled their vision of a prayer walk through Germany. After a three-month prayer walk in 2012, many more have followed. In this year of the celebration of the Reformation, our land will be covered with the light and love of God through prayer in many different ways. From June 1st to July 13th there will be a walk in five stages from Dresden in the east to Rostock in the north to Saarbrücken in the west. The stage towards Rostock will be travelled for the first time by canoe. They are still looking for a car and driver to transport the luggage for one or more weeks. (Any offers should be addressed to the Call of the Watchmen - International !)

Prayer:

- **Thanks for this initiative. (1 Chronicles 29:10-13)**
- **For divine answers to all outstanding planning issues and needs. (Proverbs 16:20)** -RS-

German Prayer Conference in Berlin - September 1st-3rd

More information and registration will be available in May. **Please start praying for all the preparations.**

Keep praying – Security in Germany

The latest attack tells us that the danger level is still high. In the past months some potential attackers have been arrested. **Continue to pray for protection from terrorist attacks in our land and for the police who are under very heavy demand to ensure our security. (2 Samuel 22:3)** -RS-

Dates for your diary

- 07.05** State elections in Schleswig-Holstein.
- 14.05** State elections in North Rhine Westphalia.
- 24.05-28.05** Protestant State Church Annual Conference
- 24.05** 50th Anniversary of Reunification of Jerusalem
- 27.05** Global Outreach Day
- 27.05-25.06** 30 Days of Prayer for the Muslim World
(Prayer Guide: <https://www.pray30days.org/order/>)

Blessings from Rosemarie Stresemann, Ortwin Schweitzer and Team