

December 2018

Lord, the light of your love is shining

In December we celebrate Advent. Traditionally this is a time for fasting in the Orthodox Church. It would be good for us also if we practice some restraint during this time – as a confirmation that we are not subject to the gods of consumerism. Let therefore us make our prayer day this month a day of fasting! Advent is not about consuming more of what this world has to offer – it is a time to prepare ourselves to meet the Lord of lords and the King of kings!

In the spiritual darkness at this time the praise song *“Shine, Jesus, shine!”* rings in my ears and in my heart. This is a song that leads us as intercessors to focus upon Jesus. The song that rang out in the streets of Berlin in 2000 during the first *“Jesus-Tag”* (day of celebration) in Germany.

Let us all sing and pray it once again: ***Lord, the light of your love is shining, in the midst of the darkness shining.*** This is our hope – that God is light and lets his light shine to show his love for us.

Let us pray: ***Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us; set us free by the truth you now bring us – shine on me, shine on me.*** We do not realise that we are still very much bound in darkness and how much we still need God’s light in Jesus to dispel this darkness. We personally and our land need this truth to set us free!

Chorus: ***Shine, Jesus, shine, fill this land with the Father’s glory; blaze, Spirit blaze, set our hearts on fire. Flow, river, flow, flood the nations with grace and mercy; send forth Your word, Lord, and let there be light!***

When we ourselves reach out towards the light, then we become light that shines in the darkness around us (Matthew 5:14 - You are the light of the world.).

Lord, I come to Your awesome presence, from the shadows into Your radiance; by Your blood I may enter Your brightness: search me, try me, consume all my darkness – shine on me, shine on me.

We need this process of inner cleansing before we pray for our land (1 Corinthians 3:18).

As we gaze on Your kingly brightness so our faces display Your likeness, ever changing from glory to glory: mirrored here, may our lives tell your story – shine on me, shine on me. Prepared in this way, in the light of God’s grace let us look upon our land in darkness and pray with earnest desire for the light of Jesus to shine. -RS-

Stepping out into the future – new leaders for the “Union”

The door has opened for a leadership change in the “Union” parties. Both Chancellor Merkel (CDU) and Interior Minister Seehofer (CSU) are resigning as the party chair-person. With these changes a political era is coming to an end and we should thank God for both leaders, even if we perhaps have not been in agreement with all they have done. It is important to God *how* the change in leadership is conducted (cf. Saul and David). The handover should be done with *“grace and dignity”*. The change in leadership in

the CDU will take place this month (December) and in the CSU in January.

As Merkel and Seehofer will both remain in their positions in the federal government, good cooperation with the new party leaders will be very important.

The coming change in leadership is more than just a generational change. God is calling for men and women who can lead our nation into the future. We are living in a time of radical change and upheaval which can be compared to the time of the industrial revolution. We need new ideas and concepts in almost all fields of political responsibility. We cannot move forward with old ideas. We need politicians who are *“future oriented”*, who can foresee the developments and major changes which are on the horizon. God already has ideas and solutions. When we are praying for the new leaders, then let us ask God that they will be God-fearing, stand with Israel, and also approach the great challenges of the future with God’s wisdom.

Prayer:

- **Praise and thanks to God for Angela Merkel and Horst Seehofer. (Psalm 147:7)**
- **Pray for a successful and effective change in leadership in the Union – both in the CDU and CSU. (Psalm 118:25)**
- **For God-fearing politicians who take a new and serious approach to our relationship with Israel and prepare our country for the future. (Daniel 2:21) -AS-**

A culture of honour and respect

A mark of the '68-Revolution was a sense of contempt and rebellion against any form of appointed authority. Today, 50 years later, this way of thinking with no respect for leaders has established itself as a *“norm”* in society. We experience this lack of appreciation for those in leadership in our politics, in the media, on the street and even in churches. This has such a destructive influence in society as it spreads disrespect and mistrust. The essence and nature of the kingdom of God is however completely opposite to this way of thinking. The commandment to honour your father and mother exhorts us not only to appreciate and respect our parents but also those in equivalent positions with responsibility for us in various other areas of our lives and our society. This commandment gives us a wonderful promise for our lives – and figuratively also for our land when we extend the application of this principle: *“...that it may go well with you”* (Ephesians 6:2-3). The *“mind of Christ”* is to regard others as being better than yourself and to treat one another with respectful consideration. This does not mean that we call evil good. Sin must be called sin and treated as such: in identificational repentance and intercession. This is also a form of honouring. The culture of the kingdom of God is a culture of honour and respect in mutual love and appreciation. Let us strive for a change of heart and mind in our society and let it begin with us.

Prayer:

- **That those in authority and with responsibility in our land receive more respect and appreciation. (1 Timothy 2:1-4; Romans 12:9-10)**
- **For an increase in the “mind of Christ” within the body of Christ. (Philippians 2:1-4)**
- **For an attitude of love, honour and respect for one another according to 1 Peter 2:17.** -TF-

The significance of the Federal Constitutional Court

Stephan Harbarth is the new Vice-President of the Federal Constitutional Court. This was in fact one of the most significant appointments in the Republic of Germany. In all probability, Harbarth will replace the current President Vosskuhle in 2020. Harbarth will then hold the fifth highest position in Germany for 10 years – longer than most periods for a Chancellor. Stephan Harbarth is 46 years old and vice-chairman of the CDU/CSU Union parliamentary group. He is a Catholic and the father of three children. The Federal Constitutional Court is a major power factor in the political system of the Federal Republic. The strength of the court in Karlsruhe lies in its power to make interpretive decisions which German citizens can trust. The highest German court plays a key role in the democratic exercise of power and decision making. It comprises 16 judges. Half of them are elected by the Federal Parliament, half by the Federal States Council – each with a two-thirds majority. The Federal Constitutional Court keeps watch over the observance of the German Basic Law. Every German citizen can call upon the court. Every year there are about 6,000 constitutional appeals; the court is acting more and more as a “citizens’ court”.

The Federal Constitutional Court is a political actor and often acts as arbiter in conflicts between the government and the opposition. It can require revisions to laws proposed by parliament. Legislation is thus checked for possible non-compliance with the Federal Constitution. Its decisions have no minor consequences when one looks at past verdicts in many cases: Pregnancy termination (1993), Taxation of homosexual couples (2013), Retention of personal data (2010), Headscarf ban (2003). At our Prayer Conference in May in Bonn we will further explain the significance of the German Basic Law and the Federal Constitutional Court, since the court often decidedly influences the direction in which our land is heading.

Prayer:

- **Thanks for our Basic Law and the constitutional law and order under which we are privileged to live. (1 Timothy 2:1ff)**
- **For the work of the Federal Constitutional Court and for the pending decisions that will be made by this body for our society. (Psalm 119:34; Proverbs 9:10)**
- **That God raises up continuous intercession for our judicial system. (Proverbs 14:34)** -AS-

God speaks through the weather

The dry weather during the hot summer months in Germany has now gone on for many months. The water level in rivers and lakes continues to fall and ships can no longer sail with their usual loads. Farmers are also suffering from crop failures. 2018 could be the driest year since records began. We read in the Bible how God often spoke to nations by withholding the rain. Do we understand what he wants to say to us? The “spiritual water level” is also predominantly low all over our land. In times of drought we should be able to call out to God and declare his promise to send (spiritual) rain over our land.

Prayer:

- **Lord, open our ears to hear and understand what you are saying to us. (Revelation 2:7a)**
- **Declare in faith God’s promise to send rain over the land. (Isaiah 35)** -AS-

Israel and the King of the Jews

When we pray for political situations in our land or in Israel, then we direct our prayers to God the Father in the name of Jesus. The name of Jesus is the name above all names and God has given him a place of power “far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title [name] that can be given ...” (Ephesians 1:21). Accused before the Romans, Jesus was also condemned by them at the political level as “the King of the Jews”. This claim to power was written above him on the cross as the basis for his guilt and death sentence: “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews” (INRI). And this King will come again to restore the promised kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6-7).

Something in the way we think, feel and act changes when we worship Jesus as the King of the Jews. And also when we declare, wherever we are, in our everyday life: “Hail, Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews”. It is a proclamation that again connects Jesus to his people. We need to hear this proclamation in our land, especially now, since another “hail” message is now being proclaimed on our streets once again. Let us take every opportunity this month to make use of our proclamation “Hail, Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews” - in prayer for our land and for Israel, when stepping into a shop, in the train, in a home, etc. (It must not always be said out loud!)

Israel is going through a very difficult time politically: Israel’s Defence Minister Lieberman has resigned in protest against an agreed cessation of hostilities with Hamas. Prime Minister Netanyahu has taken over his office. At any moment his coalition majority of just one vote could be lost and there will have to be new elections.

Prayer:

- **That the people of Israel will recognise Jesus as their anointed King and welcome him to come to Jerusalem. (Luke 13:35)**
- **Proclaim Isaiah 9:2-7 over the unstable political circumstances in Israel.** -RS-

*God’s blessings for a wonderful Advent season.
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