

*The following is the text of an email Father Brian sent to the parishioners of St. Lawrence on Friday, January 8<sup>th</sup>, two days following the harrowing events that took place at our nation's Capitol. This message does not pretend to be an exhaustive analysis, but rather an initial reaction to a shared national tragedy.*

Dear Parishioners, Friends, & Fellow Americans,

I'll be honest and admit I didn't intend to send out an e-blast this week . . . there just wasn't too much that seemed newsworthy (until Wednesday), and I'd never envisioned this communique to be something I send every single week (though since the spring, it has been!).

I felt, though, that given the profoundly disturbing events of Wednesday afternoon (ironically, the traditional date of the Epiphany), I ought to reach out. I'm sure all of you are by now painfully aware of the mayhem and criminal behavior that took place on the grounds of our nation's Capitol, and worse, within it's chambers, hallways and offices. Like me, you may have been watching the chaos unfold in real time, or may only have caught up with events after the Capitol was finally cleared. And like me, I'm going to presume that most if not all of you were deeply distressed to see a building that has become a semi-sacred symbol of our Republic under assault—windows being broken, rioters parading with banners and flags through the corridors, offices broken into, elected officials having to be hurriedly rushed away, and worst of all, lives being lost. As I watched, my own emotions ricocheted between anger at those who broke through perimeters, invaded the building, even scaled the walls, and an aching sadness that our country should continue to be suffering this kind of social and political distress—only days after saying good-bye to a year of almost continual trauma, heartache, and stress.

I don't pretend to be a political or societal analyst. I won't suggest facile answers to the deep-seated problems and challenges we face as a nation. But as a priest and a disciple, I instinctively believe we must turn to prayer, beseeching the Lord to let his healing Spirit rest on our troubled nation; to fill our leaders with wisdom and courage at this critical moment; to help us root out from our own hearts every trace of malice; and to pray, as Jesus commands us, even for our enemies and those with whom we vehemently disagree. Perhaps, as one commentator familiar with the Twelve Steps remarked, this week's disgraceful events can be something akin to hitting "rock bottom," a place of brutal honesty from which real recovery can begin.

Our nation is a singularly beautiful one, so richly blessed among the peoples of the world, and one of the noblest experiments in self-governance in the history of the world. I have no doubt that with God's gracious help, we will learn from this trauma, hopefully becoming all the more vigilant in protecting the liberties we often take for granted, and living up to the responsibilities we too often shirk.

Pray for our country at this time of testing. Pray for our leaders—both current and future. Pray for those who turn to violence as a solution to their grievances. Pray that the pain we are struggling through will yield a greater unity, a deeper commitment to the rule of law, a more genuine love for our fellow Americans—including those toward whom we feel the greatest antipathy.

May the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who, under the title of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception is the patroness of the United States, guide the whole of our nation toward reconciliation, healing, unity, and peace.

Wishing you [a restful weekend, and] every blessing in the new year,

*Fr. Brian*

