

Canopy of Prayer

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contributor
Jill Jeal
EU of Prayer



Dear praying friends in Europe

We all know the "golden rule" Jesus gave us: "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Luke 6:31). Jesus' command to his disciples sets the bar very high and asks us to put ourselves in the other person's position and ask ourselves "What would I like to have done to me if I were in their circumstances?" If we are honest, it requires a superhuman amount of grace to deal this way with others, especially those with whom we disagree or even see as opponents (enemies) in one way or another. This is not the way of the world – and certainly not the way much of today's politics are usually done! Let's approach God's throne of grace with humility once again not only for our needs to be met, but to receive grace to pass on to those "others" around us.

Jill Jeal

Populism

What is populism?

Populist parties can be on either the left wing or right wing of the political spectrum in different countries. Those who have studied this growing phenomenon describe it as a reaction to the changing world order which leaves people feeling neglected and no longer in control.

Whilst legitimate opposition is necessary and healthy in any democracy, populist leaders frame the debate in terms of "us" (the people) and "them" (the ruling elite), who do not listen to the people or understand their problems. Those they disagree with are portrayed as being completely wrong whereas "we" are completely right.



Former U.K. Chief Rabbi, Lord Sacks, wrote that to gain traction "populism has to identify an enemy" and it then underlines its claims of being a victim at the enemy's hands, using language to dehumanise or disrupt. Social media is often used as a tool to connect directly with people and bypass any interference from journalists.

Populist leaders have the ability to reduce complex issues to simple slogans and to offer simplistic solutions to knotty problems, using the type of language that highlights anxieties, fosters fear and gives rise to anger at those who are deemed to be responsible.

Populism and Christianity

It has been observed that most populists tend to be secular. Those who claim to be Christians may well attend church, but that does not necessarily mean that they have a personal or theological attachment to Christianity. Rather, they use Christianity more as an identity than a faith, showing an interest in Christian values, but only those which relate to "us". Christianity is then used to exclude "the others" often with a focus on immigrants and especially Muslims. Christianity is drained of its personal, spiritual content and the cross used as a symbol of national or cultural identity rather than a challenging symbol of sacrifice and reconciliation. It becomes evident again that there is a difference between people who call themselves Christians and those who live like Christians.

What should our response be?

The bible teaches that all human beings are made in the image of God and should not be categorised or dehumanised. Jesus tells us to love our neighbours – and our enemies!

We are called to seek the truth and to resist lies, misrepresentation, manipulation and subterfuge. We should avoid being on one side of a debate from which all complexity or nuance has been removed, but rather seek to engage in conversation and exchange.

As citizens of the eternal Kingdom of God, we are the ones who can bring hope to those who are anxious or fearful.

Let us pray,

- that in these times of change, we will not give in to fear, but put our faith in the one who has all of history in His hands;
- for politicians to be elected who live by Godly principles, who will preserve and strengthen democracy and freedom, and who will work for the good of all.



European Elections 2019

The elections take place on 23rd May in the Netherlands and the U.K.

on 24th May in Ireland
on 24th and 25th in the
Czech Republic

on 25th May in Latvia, Malta
and Slovakia

on 26th May in Austria,
Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia,
Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia,
Finland, France, Germany,
Greece, Hungary, Italy,
Lithuania, Luxembourg,
Poland, Portugal, Romania,
Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.

Let's pray not just for our own countries, but for all EU nations in these elections, which are important for the future of our continent.

Additional prayer point:-

1. In the aftermath of a political scandal in Austria, the government coalition has collapsed leaving the senior partner to fill ministerial gaps. This could lead to an early election, possibly in September.

CONTACT Canopy of Prayer,
Ortwin Schweitzer, Ian Jeal,
Corrie Oosterhuis
info@canopyofprayer.eu
www.canopyofprayer.eu

DONATION Waechterruf e.V.,
IBAN DE73 6129 0120 0464 0500 06
BIC GENODE31NUE
Use "Project 2100", Name and
Address