

One Thing We Can All Do for Our Country

You [Lord] who have imbued us with unalienable rights that we may serve you in freedom ... we ask your blessing upon us now. Conscious that unless you build the house those who build it labor in vain and unless you watch over the city we keep vigil in vain, we ask you first to grant us that holy fear to revere the dignity, responsibility, and freedom you have entrusted to us.

The Rev. Paul Scalia spoke these powerful words in his [invocation](#) at The Heritage Foundation's 50th anniversary celebration gala. This invocation was brought to my attention via Tucker Carlson's recent [widely-viewed speech](#) at the same event. At the beginning of his speech, Carlson takes a moment to offer Scalia a note of appreciation: "And I want to thank you, Father Scalia, that invocation for some reason, that really got me. ... It reminded me that I don't pray enough for the country, and I should, but the answer is to include the country in your prayers, and thank you for reminding us."

Scalia is the son of deceased Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia and a priest in the Diocese of Arlington, which happens to be the diocese where I live, and he is known here for his holiness and gift for words.

Indeed, in his invocation, Scalia's words speak to the heart of America. In the quote opening this article, he reminds us that dignity, responsibility, and freedom are entwined and that you can't have one without the other two.

"Bless our nation for whose good we strive," he continues. Indeed, all too often, many of our leaders from across the spectrum of politics make vigorous efforts on behalf of a cause but neglect, in the process, the good of the country at large.

Near the end of his invocation, Scalia says, "Finally, be with us in this time of thanksgiving and joy, to bring grace to our conversations, to our friendships, old and new." And though he is addressing those present at the gala, we can again find meaning for ourselves and ask for these same attributes of grace in our relations with others.

At another point in his own speech, Carlson returns to Scalia's invocation: "Father Scalia, I was actually overcome a little bit with emotion as you prayed, because I realized that I was so upset by the behavior of some people I love, frankly, in a country I revere and always have, that I wasn't praying for the country. That's on me and we all should be."

In his concluding remarks, Carlson once again harkens back to this idea of prayer. Of the current struggles between what he sees as good and evil in our country, he says: "Maybe we should all take just 10 minutes a day to say a prayer about it. ... I'm coming to you from the most humble and lowly theological position you can. ... And even I have concluded it might be worth taking just 10 minutes out of your busy schedule to say a prayer for the future, and I hope you will."

All of us are acutely aware, as are these two men, of the many tribulations now besetting our country—the bitter political and cultural divides that tear apart friends and families, the contempt of our enemies overseas, the mistrust of our allies. In the face of these unceasing storms, we feel powerless, unable to make any sort of difference. This feeling of futility is incredibly dangerous, for it is the mother of hopelessness, which is despair under another name. Smother hope, and whatever battle we are fighting is already lost.

By way of example and suggestion, however, Scalia and Carlson have given us a means of counterattack against despair. We can daily lift up our hearts and minds to God. Whether we pray for 10 minutes or 10 seconds a day, we can ask God's help for our besieged country, offering prayers of thanksgiving for the

existence of the United States and prayers of petition asking that our nation always defend life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. And for those who aren't accustomed to such prayers, or who need help with the words, Scalia's words throughout this article may aid you along the way.

There's an old [quip](#), often attributed to Otto von Bismarck, that goes, "God has a special providence for fools, drunkards, and the United States of America."

Maybe we're not too late to ask Him for some help.

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