

**Reflection
Service of Dedication for
Governor Branstad and Lieutenant Governor Reynolds**

**Bishop Richard Pates
January 15, 2015**

Christ the King Church

Since he is the Governor's Pastor, I deem it appropriate to say a few words of gratitude and commendation to our host, Monsignor Frank Bognanno, Pastor of Christ the King parish.

Wherever I go, ever so frequently I am asked: "Do you know our Pastor, Monsignor Bognanno?" He definitely creates a positive impression and strong loyalty. As has been the case with past assignments, Monsignor has transformed Christ the King Community.

The centers and buildings that embrace this community reflect Monsignor's vision of God tangibly present in the journey of our lives.

The Church
School/Preschool
Youth Center
Free Health Clinic for the Poor
Affordable Senior Housing
Beautiful/Welcoming Parish Center.

A thriving bi-lingual and bi-ritual Anglo and Hispanic Community characterize the parish coming together eventually as ONE. I call it the "Bognanno Empire." I cite the foregoing insofar as the Monsignor will mark significant milestones this year – his 75th birthday on January 21st and his 50th anniversary as a priest on June 6th. Warmest congratulations Monsignor Bognanno. It is no wonder why Governor and Mrs. Branstad have chosen you as Pastor, given your remarkable productivity.

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As we render prayer on behalf of Governor Branstad and Lieutenant Governor Reynolds, we extend congratulations to them. After an extensive campaign, the people of Iowa have selected them to lead the government of our beloved state for the next four years.

The Governor's journey to this moment reflects significant markers:

- He has survived six gubernatorial campaigns without defeat;
- He is the youngest to serve as Governor in the history of the State of Iowa;
- He is already the longest serving Governor of Iowa and the longest serving active Governor of any state in the United States;

- More recently, the Governor has benefitted from the partnership of the capable and energetic Lieutenant Governor, Kim Reynolds.
- Throughout, Governor Branstad has been blessed with his charming wife, Chris, and his loyal, sometimes exuberant children and grandchildren.

I cite these passages simply to note that it is obvious that God in his providence has already been faithful in his companionship with Governor Branstad during years of extraordinary service. I am sure that he joins all of us in thanking God for this presence.

It is with trust, therefore, that we pray for the Governor and Lieutenant Governor as they launch into a fresh four years.

One of the goals of President George H.W. Bush (President Bush I) which gained traction with the American public was his espousal that the United States become a kinder and gentler nation.

Given the significant divisions and painful polarization of so many factions in our midst it seems appropriate to once again invoke this desired characteristic for today's society.

In an agricultural state like Iowa, we see the living out of the expression: "You can take the boy off the farm but you can't take the farm out of the boy."

Both Governor Branstad and Lieutenant Governor Reynolds are professed Christians. By analogy we could say that you can take the Christian out of the Church setting but you cannot take the Christianity out of the individual acting in the public, secular sphere.

The beatitudes read this evening are the magna carta for the Christian tradition. Living out of the beatitudes is of benefit to believers and unbelievers alike, particularly in building a society where authentic love is the cornerstone and achieving the common good is the outcome.

As we pray for and with the Governor and lieutenant Governor we urge that particular focus be on two of the beatitudes.

- 1) Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God.

In his fifth term, Governor Branstad made every effort to attend the funerals of fallen military heroes in contemporary conflict. A noble gesture indeed.

Encompassing those fallen and those wounded physically, mentally and emotionally are great tragedy and searing pain.

In long-term response to war and its victims we are called to be peacemakers. In trying to affect peace may God give to our political leaders the insight and courage to penetrate the corridors of influence to address root causes of conflict and terrorism and to find enduring security in friendship among the peoples of the world.

As Pope Francis has repeatedly reminded us – we are one human family, all brothers and sisters. May we follow the steps to peace: which are encounter and dialogue ultimately leading to positive relationships.

On the local level we know too that adequate economic provisions – jobs and family wages enable these families to experience a sense of tranquility and enjoy the God-endowed dignity which he intends for all of us, each made in his image and likeness.

- 2) The second beatitude that is highly appropriate for our times is: Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy.

In an era which is populated by rugged individualists and characterized by the take no prisoners philosophy, where fellow humans are relegated to a throw-away society and the vulnerable young and elderly are abandoned, may the religious and social service community, the business sector, educators and the workers of the world come together in coalition under the leadership of government to render justice to the crown of God's creation, each human person. May genuine and heartfelt mercy be extended to so many in our midst who are suffering, are underprivileged and denied basic human rights.

When culture is merciful all benefit from the mercy, compassion, understanding and tenderness at the heart of humanity which Pope Francis attributes to God's Spirit moving among us. And, that vision of President Bush – surely desirable in every administration – a gentler and kinder nation, becomes more and more reality benefitting all.

We pray in confidence for you Governor Branstad and Lieutenant Governor Reynolds. Certainly you have experienced God's providence and companionship in years' past. Your milestones and accomplishments are sure testimony to this. Tonight, we trust that abundant blessings are yet in store for you and Iowa. We take courage from the passage in the Book of Lamentations that God's favors are far from exhausted.