



## National Day of Prayer, 1990

*By the President of the United States of America*

### **A Proclamation**

"More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of," wrote Lord Tennyson more than a century ago. Today, we are deeply mindful of the truth of his words. Our Nation's history and the lives of millions of men and women around the world provide compelling evidence of the power of faith and the efficacy of prayer.

The Bible tells us what we have often seen for ourselves: that God answers the prayers of those who place their trust in Him. In the Old Testament story of Hannah and Samuel and the New Testament parable of the Prodigal Son, we find a universal experience of parenthood: long hours spent in waiting for a child and in prayer for his well-being. What mother or father has not, in unspoken thought, asked the Almighty to protect his or her little ones and thanked Him for their safekeeping?

Our ancestors believed that, in the lives of nations as well as individuals, the love of God is a great parental love like this. They saw history as the place where our Creator looks for His children, longing for them to come to Him and to do His will. As they fashioned a system of government that would carry the United States into an uncharted future, as they fled oppressed and war-torn nations to build new lives in this land of opportunity, as they shielded the spark of hope from the cold winds of tyranny and world war, time and again they came, thankful and contrite, to the inextinguishable light of the Father's house.

So great was the faith of our Founding Fathers, and so firm was their belief in the need for God's blessing upon their bold experiment in self-government, that they frequently turned to Him in prayer both as individuals and as a community. Indeed, the first act of the Continental Congress, the same body that declared America's independence, was a prayer. Thomas Jefferson and other Founders believed that the God Who gives us life gives us liberty as well, and if the American people are to keep a truly free and democratic government, they must acknowledge their dependence on His mercy and guidance. Thus, when they pledged to each other their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor in support of the Declaration of Independence, they did so "with a firm Reliance on the Protection of Divine Providence." When the Framers of our Constitution heeded Ben Franklin's call for daily prayer at the Federal Convention in 1787, it is as if they were profoundly aware of the gentle admonition found in the 127th Psalm: "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

Today, we do well to place in God's hands our hopes and concerns for our families and our communities, just as our Nation's Founders entrusted their labors to Him. The childhood of our liberty was guarded by the love of God, and the "new birth of freedom" of which President Lincoln spoke was possible only because that love was faithful to a people bitterly divided by civil war. Today, our liberty is older and our Republic has entered its third century, but we are still, as a people, in the infancy of our journey. So much greater is our need now to turn to God in prayer once again, seeking His blessing for the way that lies ahead.

On this National Day of Prayer, observed more than 200 years after the Continental Congress asked for God's blessing upon our young country, our prayers could have no better object than the safety and well-being of our children. It is for them that we labor and sacrifice, and it is for them that we struggle to uphold the noble ideals affirmed at our Nation's birth. Today, amidst our many blessings, we see the destruction of too many lives in their earliest flower—too many young minds lost to drugs, delinquency, and despair. The suffering or loss of even one of these children is more than any parent can bear, and it is more than our Nation can afford to tolerate.

I therefore ask my fellow Americans to join with me in prayer for our children. Let us strive to help each of them sink their roots into the rich soil of God's love for the beings He has made in His own image. Let us show them through prayer that we, too, like our Nation's Founders, seek our shelter—our rock and our salvation—in the arms of God. Finally, let us dedicate this Nation once more to the protection of Divine Providence, remembering the words of the Psalmist: "How excellent is thy loving kindness O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings."

Since the approval of the joint resolution of the Congress on April 17, 1952, calling for the designation of a specific day to be set aside each year as a National Day of Prayer, recognition of such a day has become a cherished annual event. Each President since then has proclaimed a National Day of Prayer annually under the authority of that resolution, continuing a tradition that actually dates back to the Continental Congress, which issued the first official proclamation for a National Day of Prayer on July 12, 1775. By Public Law 100-307, the first Thursday in May of each year has been set aside as a National Day of Prayer.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE BUSH, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 3, 1990, as a National Day of Prayer. I invite the people of the United States to gather together on that day in homes and places of worship to pray, each after his or her own manner, for the renewal of our Nation's moral heritage and for God's blessing upon each of us, especially our children.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this sixth day of March, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and fourteenth.

*George Bush*