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National Day of Prayer, 1985

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

The history of the American Nation is one of conviction in the face of tyranny, courage in the midst of turmoil and faith despite the roils of doubt and defeatism. Throughout our 208 years of freedom, the people of the United States have drawn upon the lessons learned at the dawn of our liberty by acting "with a firm reliance on Divine Providence" and expressing gratitude for the many blessings a loving God has showered upon us.

These lessons have not been learned and honored without difficulty. During the Revolutionary War, the Continental Congress proclaimed a National Day of Prayer each year for eight years, a practice that ended with the winning of the peace in 1783. Decades later, while the Civil War raged, this observance was renewed by Abraham Lincoln. Responding to a Senate Resolution requesting the President to designate and set apart a day for prayer and humiliation, Lincoln said that "intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us." He then called the Nation to prayer.

Our very existence as a free Nation, then, has provided potent witness to the efficacy of prayer. Grover Cleveland, in his First Inaugural Address, said, "Above all, I know that there is a Supreme Being who rules the affairs of men and whose goodness and mercy have always followed the American people, and I know He will not turn from us now if we humbly and reverently seek His powerful aid." Franklin D. Roosevelt, in his Fourth Inaugural Address, expressed the same thought, "The Almighty God has blessed our land in many ways. . . So we pray to Him now for the vision to see our way clearly—to see the way that leads to a better life for ourselves and for all our fellow men—to the achievement of His will, to peace on earth."

Today our Nation is at peace and is enjoying prosperity, but our need for prayer is even greater. We can give thanks to God for the ever-increasing abundance He has bestowed on us, and we can remember all those in our society who are in need of help, whether it be material assistance in the form of charity or simply a friendly word of encouragement. We are all God's handiwork, and it is appropriate for us as individuals and as a Nation to call to Him in prayer.

By joint resolution of the Congress approved April 17, 1952, the recognition of a particular day set aside each year as a National Day of Prayer has become a cherished national tradition. Since that time, every President has proclaimed an annual National Day of Prayer, resuming the tradition begun by the Continental Congress.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 2, 1985, as a National Day of Prayer. I call upon the citizens of this great Nation to gather together on that day in homes and places of worship to pray, each after his or her own manner, for unity of the hearts of all mankind.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-ninth day of January, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and ninth.

Ronald Reagan