
Presidential Documents

Title 3—

Proclamation 6877 of April 2, 1996

The President

National Day of Prayer, 1996

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

America's heritage is rich with expressions of faith in God. Indeed, the desire for religious freedom was one of the chief reasons that early settlers risked their lives to come to this land. Many of those who braved the long ocean journey were men and women of devout religious beliefs who sought a new home where they might worship without persecution. The authors of our Constitution recognized this history in the language of the first amendment, and through times of uncertainty, sorrow, and pain, the citizens of the United States have called upon the wisdom and mercy of the Almighty for guidance and strength.

A National Day of Prayer, first proclaimed by the Continental Congress in 1775, stems from the understanding that faith is a fundamental part of our Nation's social fabric. In an impassioned speech before the Constitutional Convention in 1787, Benjamin Franklin put the importance of prayer in perspective, proposing that “. . . prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to business” And so it has been to this day in statehouses all over our great land.

Today we cherish the liberties the first immigrants fought so hard to obtain, and we enjoy a degree of freedom and prosperity only dreamed of 200 years ago. And though our citizens come from every nation on Earth and observe an extraordinary variety of religious faith and traditions, prayer remains at the heart of the American spirit. We face many of the same challenges as our forebears—ensuring the survival of freedom and sustaining faith in an often hostile world—and we continue to pray, as they did, for the blessings of a just and benevolent God to guide our Nation's course.

This occasion calls us to affirm our country's spiritual roots and to humbly express our gratitude to the source of our abundant good fortune. As we seek to renew the values that have long strengthened America's families and communities, let us reach out to God and to one another for wisdom and courage. We should celebrate this day in the tradition of our founders who believed that God governs in the affairs of men and women, and who based their greatest hopes, dreams, and aspirations on the surety of divine protection.

The Congress, by Public Law 100–307, has called on our citizens to reaffirm annually our dependence on Almighty God by recognizing a “National Day of Prayer.”

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 2, 1996, as a National Day of Prayer. I encourage every citizen of this great Nation to pray, each in his or her own manner, seeking strength from God to face the challenges of today, requesting guidance for the uncertainties of tomorrow, and giving thanks for the rich blessings that our Nation has enjoyed throughout our history. “Do not pray for easy lives,” said John F. Kennedy in 1963, “Pray to be stronger” May it be so with each of us.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this second day of April, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twentieth.

William Clinton

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