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(Smith/Simon)
May 2, 1989
Draft One
PRAYER

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: PRAYER BREAKFAST
WASHINGTON, D.C.
MAY 4, 1989

Dr. and Mrs. Bright, Reverend Clergy, Members of the National Day of Prayer Committee, Congressmen, Ladies and Gentlemen.

You know, there were times during last year's campaign when it was said of this morning's speaker, "He hasn't got a prayer." Well, I am delighted to address an audience of whom that will never be said.

Let me say what a pleasure it is to be here. For we meet on a special day -- for America, a National Day of Prayer.

And let me pledge, also, not to overstay my welcome at this early-morning hour. Believe me, if brevity is the soul of wit, you'll soon be comparing me with Oscar Wilde.

I want to thank you, first, for your past friendship and support. And for your kindness in extending this invitation. And I would like to take just a few moments to share some thoughts among friends.

'Like you, I believe in the separation of church and state. But I do not believe in a separation of morality and state. Yes, like you, I believe in pluralism, and in mutual tolerance. But I also believe that we are "One Nation Under God" -- and that it, and we, were placed here on earth to do His work.

Our work has gone on, now, for more than 200 years -- work best embodied in four simple words: "In God We Trust."

It was to that Higher Being that George Washington looked when, addressing his troops in 1776, he said, "The fate of unborn millions will now depend, under God, on the courage and conduct of this army."

Lincoln, too, believed in divine providence. Leaving Springfield to assume the Presidency, he told his home people that "The great God which helped General Washington must now help me. Without that great assistance, I will surely fail. With it, I cannot fail."

And who can forget how on D-Day, over a nationwide radio network, Franklin Roosevelt prayed for the safety and success of

our invading force. "Our sons," he said, "pride of our Nation. Lead them straight and true. Give strength to their arms, stoutness to their hearts, steadfastness to their faith."

Yes, history tells us what our hearts confirm. As Americans, we are a religious people. We revere the family, and the love that it radiates. We know that America is great because America is good.

That is why we must work, together, for a Constitutional Amendment to ban Federal funding of abortions. My friends, life does not begin at birth; life begins at conception. Without life at conception there would be no life at birth.

We should work, too, to reaffirm traditional values in our Nation's schools -- values like respect, self-discipline, good citizenship.

That is why I have unveiled an education program to demand accountability, and reward achievement. And why, as soon as budget realities allow, we must approve tuition tax credits for our private schools. And, today, I call for the passage of a Constitutional Amendment to allow voluntary prayer in the classrooms of America. We need the Federal courts out of our nation's schools -- and we need the Faith of our Fathers back in.

We can do these things, and must. But even more, we can honor God in a most profound and personal way -- daily, as human beings, by the conduct of our lives.

You know, a public official once composed this prayer: "God bless mother and daddy, my brother and sister. And, oh God, do take care of yourself, because if anything happens to you we're all sunk."

God is, indeed, "A Mighty Fortress." So, let us do His will -- not ask Him, haughtily, to do ours. Let us practice charity and self-sacrifice. And truly love our neighbor. Let us remember The Golden Rule, and "Do Unto Others." And let us strive, however feebly, to live the eternal verities of decency, civility, humility, kindness.

I thought of those verities last Sunday, when I visited New York to mark the 200th anniversary of our first President's first Inaugural Address. For preceding its reenactment, I did what Washington did, also, two centuries ago -- pray at Saint Paul's Chapel, where in 1789 a prayer service was offered by the Chaplain of Congress for the United States of America.

To me, the entire day was moving, intimate. But my time at Saint Paul's was especially so. For it reminded me that political values without moral values cannot sustain a Nation. And there, in that tiny church, I thought of God's enduring

mission: To be the rock not simply of our age -- but of our children's ages to come.

Let us assist that mission, as Americans and as believers. And let me thank you for inviting me, and for this wonderful occasion. Today, I take special joy in saying: God bless you all, and God bless America.

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Simon
(Comments) (Smith/Simon)
May 3, 1989
Draft Two
PRAYER

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: PRAYER BREAKFAST
STATE DINING ROOM
THURSDAY, MAY 4, 1989

Dr. and Mrs. Bright, Reverend Clergy, Members of the National Day of Prayer Committee, Members of the House and Senate, Ladies and Gentlemen.

You know, it is often said of a group or individual that "He hasn't got a prayer." Well, I am delighted to address an audience about whom that will never be said.

First, I want to say what a pleasure it is to welcome you -- America's religious, civic, and political leaders -- to this, America's House.

We gather here as friends, and as believers in a humane and loving God. And we meet on a special day for America -- a National Day of Prayer.

You know, a little boy once uttered this simple prayer: "God bless mother and daddy, my brother and sister. And, oh God, do take care of yourself, because if anything happens to you we're all sunk."

At times, I'm sure all of us have shared those sentiments. And so did the Continental Congress, for it was they who in 1775 issued the first official proclamation of a National Day of Prayer.

In 1952, Congress decreed that a specific date be set aside each year for Americans to gather in homes and places of worship to pray. And, since then, every President has proclaimed a National Day of Prayer.

This morning, like my predecessors, I am proud to continue that tradition. But I'm pleased to note that today marks a departure from the norm. For 1989 marks the first year of an official permanent date of designation -- from now on, the first Thursday of every May.

My friends, I'm glad that together, we could commemorate this event. And just for a few moments, I'd like to focus on what -- to me, and I hope to you -- our observance means.

It means that we believe in the separation of church and state. But not in a separation of morality and state. While the government must remain neutral towards particular religions, it need not remain neutral towards values that Americans support. Yes, we believe in pluralism, and in mutual tolerance. For we are "One Nation Under God" -- and we were placed here on earth to do His work.

Our work has gone on now for more than 200 years -- work best embodied in four simple words: "In God We Trust."

It was to that Higher Being that George Washington looked when, addressing his troops in 1776, he said, "The fate of unborn millions will now depend, under God, on the courage and conduct of this army."

Lincoln, too, believed in divine providence. Leaving Springfield to assume the Presidency, he told the people of his hometown that ~~the~~ God which helped General Washington must now help ^{him} me. "Without the ~~great~~ assistance of the Diving Being," Lincoln said, "With that assistance, I cannot fail."

And some of you may be too young to remember how on D-Day, over a nationwide radio network, Franklin Roosevelt prayed for the safety and success of our invading force. "Our sons," he said, "pride of our Nation. Lead them straight and true. Give strength to their arms, stoutness to their hearts, steadfastness in their faith."

Our history tells us what our hearts confirm. As Americans, we are a religious people. We prize compassion and self-sacrifice. We know that America is great because America is good.

As President, I'm reminded of that constantly. Several weeks ago, for instance, I journeyed to central Pennsylvania. First, I went to a local high-school. And discussed a problem which is America's problem: the rising use of drugs.

But then, I traveled a few miles to meet with Amish and Mennonite leaders. Wonderful people, kind. You know what? They don't have a drug problem. You know why? Faith and family, they told me. Against them, drugs don't have a chance.

My friends, faith and family can help us honor God in a most profound and personal way -- daily, as human beings, by the conduct of our lives. Faith and family teach us not only to revere but to practice the Golden Rule. They also help us reflect the eternal values of decency, humility, and caring.

I thought of those values last Sunday, when I visited New York to mark the 200th anniversary of our first President's first Inaugural Address. For it was then that, like Washington two centuries ago, I prayed at Saint Paul's Chapel, where in 1789 a prayer service was offered by the Chaplain^s of Congress for the United States of America.

To me, the entire day was moving, intimate. But my time at Saint Paul's was especially so. For as I prayed, I thought of

how -- even then -- Washington had realized that political values without moral values cannot sustain a Nation.

This strong yet gentle man knew that the advancement of America, while it might rely on its presidents, would surely depend on Providence. What Washington believed so strongly over two hundred years ago, is just as true today. For without God's help, we can do nothing. With it, we can do great things -- for our children, and for the world.

Let me thank you for coming here this morning -- and all you've done to make ours a better, more decent, more peaceful Nation. And you'll understand why today, I take special joy in saying: God bless you all, and God bless America.

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