
Presidential Documents

Title 3—

Proclamation 6991 of April 18, 1997

The President

National Day of Prayer, 1997

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

America was born out of intense conflict as our forefathers fought the forces of oppression and tyranny. From our earliest history, Americans have always looked to God for strength and encouragement in those moments when darkness seemed to encroach from every side. Our people have always believed in the power of prayer and have called upon the name of the Lord through times of peace and war, hope and despair, prosperity and decline.

In his first inaugural address, during the rush of optimism that followed the Colonies' uplifting victory in the American Revolution, George Washington observed that "it would be peculiarly improper to omit, in this first official act my fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the universe." Amid the bleak turmoil of the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln conveyed similar sentiments by calling Americans to "a firm reliance on Him who has never yet forsaken this favored land." Almost a century later, Harry Truman emphasized the need for God's help in making decisions: "when we are striving to strengthen the foundation of peace and security we stand in special need of divine support."

Indeed, the familiar phrase "In God we trust," which has been our national motto for more than 40 years and which first appeared on our coinage during the Civil War, is a fitting testimony to the prayers offered up by American women and men through the centuries. Today within our Nation's Capitol Building, a stained glass window depicts General Washington humbly kneeling and repeating the words of the 16th Psalm, "Preserve me, O God, for in Thee do I put my trust."

As we face the last years of the 20th century, let us uphold the tradition of observing a day in which every American, in his or her own way, may come before God seeking increased peace, guidance, and wisdom for the challenges ahead. Even as we continue to work toward hopeful solutions, may our national resolve be matched by a firm reliance on the Author of our lives—for truly it is in God that we trust.

The Congress, by Public Law 100-307, has called 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 1, 1997, as a National Day of Prayer. As in previous years, let us once again celebrate this day in the tradition of our Founders by humbly asking for divine help in maintaining the courage, determination, faith, and vigilance so necessary to our continued advancement as a people. On this National Day of Prayer, may all Americans come together to reaffirm our reliance upon our Creator, and, in the words of Franklin Roosevelt, to "pray to Him now for the vision to see our way clearly."

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

William Clinton

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