

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., Presi-

dent of the Senate. The Executive order is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

## Remarks at an Easter Prayer Breakfast April 19, 2011

*The President.* Thank you very much. Thank you. Please, please have a seat. Well, it is absolutely wonderful to be here with all of you today. I see so many good friends all around the room.

Before I begin, I want to acknowledge one particular member of my administration who I'm extraordinarily proud of and does not get much credit, and that is USAID Administrator Dr. Raj Shah, who is doing great work with faith leaders. Where's Raj? Where is he? There he is right there. Raj is doing great work with faith leaders on our Feed the Future global hunger program, as well as on a host of other issues. We could not be prouder of the work that he's doing. I also want to acknowledge Congressman Mike McIntyre and his wife Dee. Mike—[*applause*]*—as some of you know, obviously, North Carolina was ravaged by storms this past weekend, and our thoughts and prayers are with all the families who have been affected down there. I know that Mike will be helping those communities rebuild after the devastation.*

To all the faith leaders and the distinguished guests that are here today, welcome to our second annual—I'm going to make it annual. [*Laughter*] Why not? Second Easter prayer breakfast. The Easter egg roll, that's well established. [*Laughter*] The prayer breakfast we started last year, in part because it gave me a good excuse to bring together people who have been such extraordinary influences in my life and such great friends. And it gives me a chance to meet and make some new friends here in the White House.

I wanted to host this breakfast for a simple reason, because as busy as we are, as many tasks as pile up, during this season, we are reminded that there's something about the resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ that puts everything else in perspective.

We all live in the hustle and bustle of our work. And everybody in this room has weighty responsibilities, from leading churches and denominations to helping to administer important Government programs to shaping our culture in various ways. And I admit that my plate has been full as well. [*Laughter*] The inbox keeps on accumulating. [*Laughter*]

But then comes Holy Week: the triumph of Palm Sunday, the humility of Jesus washing the disciples' feet, his slow march up that hill, and the pain and the scorn and the shame of the cross.

And we're reminded that in that moment, he took on the sins of the world—past, present, and future—and he extended to us that unfathomable gift of grace and salvation through his death and resurrection.

In the words of the Book Isaiah: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

This magnificent grace, this expansive grace, this "Amazing Grace" calls me to reflect, and it calls me to pray. It calls me to ask God for forgiveness for the times that I've not shown grace to others, those times that I've fallen short. It calls me to praise God for the gift of our son—His Son and our Savior.

And that's why we have this breakfast. Because in the middle of these critical national debates, in the middle of our busy lives, we must always make sure that we are keeping things in perspective. Children help do that.

*Audience members.* Amen. [*Laughter*]

*The President.* A strong spouse helps do that.

*Audience members.* Amen.

*The President.* But nothing beats Scripture and the reminder of the Eternal.

So I'm honored that all of you have come here this Holy Week to join me in a spirit of

prayer, and I pray that our time here this morning will strengthen us, both individually as believers and as Americans. And with that, let me introduce my good friend, Bishop Vashti McKenzie, for our opening prayer.

[At this point, Bishop Vashti M. McKenzie, presiding bishop of the 13th Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, came to the podium.]

Bishop McKenzie. Thank you so much.

The President. I just had to make a quick point. You notice that these days, prayers are on an iPad. [Laughter] This is a hi-tech bishop here.

[Bishop McKenzie then offered a prayer.]

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:39 a.m. in the East Room at the White House.

## Remarks at a Town Hall Meeting and a Question-and-Answer Session in Annandale, Virginia April 19, 2011

The President. Hello, everybody! Thank you! Everybody have a seat, have a seat.

It's good to be back. Good to be back in Annandale. Good to be back at NOVA. How is everybody doing?

I want to make a couple of acknowledgments. First of all, Congressman Gerry Connolly is here. Dr. George Gabriel, the provost of Northern Virginia Community College, is here. And the president, Bob Templin, is here.

I'm—it is great to be back. I keep on coming back because Jill Biden tells me to keep on coming back. [Laughter] I tend to listen to her. I always say Vice President Joe Biden's best quality is Jill Biden. [Laughter] Though Jill couldn't be here today because she's teaching all day, and she does not skip class for anybody, including the President of the United States. [Laughter]

What I want to do is just make a few quick remarks at the top, and then I'm just going to open it up for questions. This gives me a chance to get out of the immediate environs of Washington and hear directly from voters and have a conversation with them. And so I'm grateful that all of you took the time.

Last week, I laid out a plan to get America's finances in order. It was a plan for shared prosperity through shared sacrifice and shared responsibility. So before I take your questions, I want to talk a little bit about this plan briefly, because it goes to the heart of what's happening at this campus and schools like it all across America. And my plan does two big things.

First, it cuts spending, and it brings down the deficit. We all know how important that is. Just like any student on a tight budget—and I'm assuming there are a few students on a tight budget here. Let's see a show of hands. Any students on a tight budget? [Laughter] Yes. I've been there. Just like you, America has to start living within its means.

For a long time, Washington acted like deficits didn't matter. A lot of folks promised us a free lunch. So I think everybody needs to recall, we had a surplus back in 2000, 11 short years ago, but then we cut taxes for everybody, including millionaires and billionaires. We fought two wars, and we created a new and expensive prescription drug program. And we didn't pay for any of it.

And as the saying goes, there is no such thing as a free lunch. So we were left with a big deficit as I was coming into office, and then we had the worst recession since the Great Depression. And that made it worse, because in a recession two things happen: Number one, the Federal Government helps out States and localities to prevent teacher layoffs and firefighters and police officers from being laid off, and all that costs money. It requires more money to provide additional help to people who've lost their jobs or are in danger or losing their homes. So the Federal Government is putting more money out, but because of the recession it's taking less money in tax revenues, and so that grows the depression—the deficit further.