

Prayer for National Leaders

Almighty God, we come together on this special occasion to pray for the leaders of our great nation: For President Clinton, for Vice President Gore and the Cabinet, for members of the Congress and justices of the Supreme Court, indeed, for all the men and women who are called to serve the American people, and whose judgment, decisions, and actions affect our nation's destiny. May our leaders have the wisdom to seek your guidance, and the courage to do your will.

Lord, we know that our nation was founded and forged in prayer. We thank you for blessing America throughout our history with great leaders-with men and women who, in triumph and tragedy, sought to do what was pleasing in your sight.

We think back to the year 1775, when the brave members of the Continental Congress met in Philadelphia, aware that the fate of a noble experiment lay in their hands. But they knew they didn't carry that burden alone. Ben Franklin told that esteemed gathering, "Truly, our first order of business as a Congress is to ask the protection and guidance of Almighty God." And our Founding Fathers called for "a Day of public Humiliation, Fasting, and Prayer" throughout the Thirteen Colonies, that the people would pray for them, and that God would lead them to do what was right. And within the year a new nation was born, a nation destined to lead the world in the paths of freedom and opportunity, justice and righteousness.

We think back to the hard winter of 1777-78, when George Washington was Commander-in-Chief of the American armies. He sought shelter in Valley Forge, and protection in you. Withdrawing to a lonely, snow-covered clearing at the edge of the forest, he dropped to his knees, and humbly prayed for your protection. He beseeched you to keep liberty-loving men and women safe during that bitter cold winter that we now know

as "the crucible of freedom." And his citizen-soldiers survived to fight for a new day, to fight the good fight, for a nation that held out promise beyond measure.

Then we think back to 1861, to the newly-elected President of a troubled nation. Abraham Lincoln experienced a tearful farewell when he left his home in Springfield, Illinois, for the nation's Capitol. Before boarding the train, he spoke these poignant words. "My friends, I leave you with this request: pray for me I leave now, not knowing when, or whether ever, I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon President Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance, I cannot fail." And President Lincoln prayed frequently and fervently during the four years he was called to lead our nation, and helped reunite us-north and south, black and white-and heal our wounds.

Yes, Heavenly Father, throughout the ages our leaders have called on you, knowing that without your assistance, they could not succeed-but with your assistance, they could not fail.

And so, with confidence, we approach your throne of grace. On bended knee, we beseech you to forgive our sins-against the old and young, against the born and unborn. With long-ing hearts, we listen for your answers that are wiser than our prayers.

We ask that you send the Holy Spirit to our leaders. We ask that you send the Holy Spirit to them-and to all of us-that we may raise our hearts and voices in one refrain to you, O God, and give you thanks for the United States of America! Amen.

Prayer offered by Michigan Governor John Engler

National Prayer Breakfast Washington D.C., February 2, 1995