

December 10, 2005

Dear Friend:

**Glorious Past**

## OUR NATION'S GODLY HERITAGE

### **Soldier who becomes President pleads for prayer for himself and troops**

President Benjamin Harrison was our nation's 23rd president. The grandson of President William Henry Harrison, he was deeply schooled in the Christian faith and church life.

As a young man, Harrison's father encouraged him to avidly pursue the Christian life, writing to him "[Remember] those solemn obligations you owe to God. Youth is the time to serve the Lord. Some people think to be religious you must be melancholy and morose, but it is not so. Who has so much cause to be cheerful, as he who has made his peace with God?" As young Benjamin grew, he became active in his church teaching Sunday School, attending prayer meetings and serving others through the work of the Young Men's Christian Association.

Harrison began his married life as the tensions that led to the Civil War were heating up. After the war began, he became a colonel in the Indiana infantry serving in many campaigns and earning the rank of brigadier general for his excellent leadership and heroism. Beside his great leadership and gallantry, Harrison became known as a man of faith who relied on the prayers of others, particularly his wife. Writing to her as he was beginning his military training, Harrison wrote: "I hope you all remember us at home and that many prayers go up to God daily for my regiment and for me. Ask Him for me in prayer, my dear wife, first that He will enable me to bear myself as a good soldier of Jesus Christ; second, that He will give me valor and skill to conduct myself so as to honor my country and my friends; and lastly, if consistent with His holy will, I may be brought 'home again' to the dear loved ones, if not, that the rich consolation of His grace may be made sufficient for me and for those who survive."

## PRESIDENTIAL QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

*"The men who established this government had faith in God and sublimely trusted in Him. They besought His counsel and advice in every step of their progress. And so it has been ever since; American history abounds in instances of this trait of piety, this sincere reliance on a Higher Power in all great trials in our national affairs. Our rulers may not always be observers of the outward forms of religion but we have never had a president, from Washington to Harrison, who publicly avowed infidelity, or scoffed at the faith of the masses of our people."*

– William McKinley

## ONE NATION UNDER GOD: THE HISTORY OF PRAYER IN AMERICA

### **The First Prayer in Congress**

In the U.S. Senate hearings related to the confirmation of John G. Roberts to be confirmed as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Committee Chairman Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania remarked that the Congress is currently facing "turbulent partisanship."

For several years now, the rifts between parties and even factions within parties have reached fevered pitch. During this period it should be remembered how prayer, past and present, has been a unifying force in overcoming partisan divide. There is no greater testament to this fact that when our Founding Fathers

gathered together for the first time. When the representatives of the colonies finally gathered to chart their future course in Philadelphia on September 5, 1774, the first of two continental conventions, many of them came from towns and cities hundreds of miles away. Most of them had never been to Philadelphia and were meeting one another for the first time. To find a means to begin the process of bonding strangers to one another, to define their cause to a larger purpose from the outset, several of the leading delegates quickly concluded that the first order of business should be to seek Divine Guidance, thereby integrating both God and prayer in their public, organized cause. No one better described the setting or the events that occurred that first morning than John Adams in a letter to his wife, Abigail.

*“ When the Congress met, Mr. Cushing [of Massachusetts] made a motion that it should be opened with Prayer. It was opposed by Mr. Jay of New York and Mr. Rutledge of South Carolina, because we were so divided in religious sentiments, some Episcopalians, some Quakers, some Anabaptists, some Presbyterians, and some Congregationalists, so that we could not join in the same act of worship.*

*Mr. Samuel Adams arose and said that he was no bigot, and could hear a Prayer from any gentleman of Piety and Virtue, who was at the same time a friend to his Country. He was a stranger in Philadelphia, but had heard that Mr. Duché deserved that character, and therefore he moved that Mr. Duché, an Episcopal clergyman, might be desired, to read Prayers to Congress, tomorrow morning. The Motion was seconded, and passed in the affirmative. Mr. Randolph, our President, waited on Mr. Duché, and received for answer, that if his health would permit, he certainly would. Accordingly, the next morning [the Reverend Mr. Duché] appeared with his clerk and in his pontificals, and read several Prayers in the established form; and then read the Collect for the seventh day of September, which was the Thirty-fifth Psalm.*

*You must remember this was the next morning after we heard the horrible rumor of the cannonade of Boston.*

*I never saw a greater effect upon an audience. It seemed as if Heaven had ordained that Psalm to be read on that morning.*

*After this, Mr. Duché, unexpectedly to every body, struck out into an extemporary Prayer, which filled the bosom of every man present. I must confess, I never heard a better prayer, or one so well pronounced. Episcopalian as he is, Dr. Cooper [the Adams’ personal pastor at the Brattle Street Church in Boston] himself never prayed with such fervor, such ardor, such earnestness and pathos, and in language so elegant and sublime - for America, for the Congress, for the province of Massachusetts Bay, and especially the town of Boston. It has had an excellent effect upon everybody here ... Mr. Duché, is one of the most ingenious Men, and best characters, and greatest orators in the Episcopal order, upon this Continent yet zealous friend of liberty and his country.”*

The overall effect could no have been more emotionally charged or more instantly connecting. The Psalter that the Reverend Philip Duché read for that seventh day of September under the Episcopalian calendar was Psalm 35, known as “David’s Prayer for Help against Unjust Enemies.” Few psalms could have affected the delegates with a greater sense of what they were facing or the role that Divine Providence could play in their cause. The overnight news of the British incursion in and around Boston had been sketchy at best. Several of the delegates, who had been particularly outspoken in their views against the Crown, had every reason to believe that their homes and families were in harm’s way. The British already had made clear that they were ready to use any force necessary to put down any dissent. Psalm 35 hit such a chord on that warm summer day:

*" Plead my case, Oh, Lord, with them that strive with me, fight against them that fight against me. Take hold of buckler and shield, and rise up for my help. Draw also the spear and the battle-axe to meet those who pursue me; Say to my soul, ' I am your salvation.' Let those be ashamed and dishonored who seek my life; let those be turned back and humiliated who devise evil against me."*

After he finished, Reverend Duché unexpectedly and spontaneously added,

*" Be Thou present O God of Wisdom and direct the counsel of this Honorable Assembly; enable them to settle all things on the best and surest foundations; that the scene of blood may be speedily closed; that order, Harmony, and peace may be effectually restored, and Truth and Justice, Religion and Piety, prevail and flourish among the people.*

*Preserve the health of their bodies, and the vigor of their minds, shower down on them, and the millions they here represent, such temporal Blessings as Thou seest expedient for them in this world, and crown them with everlasting Glory in the world to come. All this we ask in the name and through the merits of Jesus Christ, Thy Son and our Saviour, Amen."*

The importance of the moment at the outset of the convention cannot be overestimated. Present that day was George Washington as were Patrick Henry, Payton Randolph, and Benjamin Franklin. As the delegates continued to pray "for America, for Congress, for the Province of Massachusetts Bay, and especially the town of Boston," Samuel Adams wrote in his diary that the prayer and the emotions that erupted were enough to "melt a heart of stone." Diplomat Silas Deane remarked that Duché "prayed with such fervency, purity, and sublimity of style and sentiment ... that even Quakers shed tears." Joseph Reed of Pennsylvania thought the prayer was a "masterful stroke of policy," while Samuel Ward of Rhode Island called it "one of the most sublime, catholic, well adapted prayers I have ever heard."

While John Jay of New York and John Rutledge of South Carolina initially had expressed their concern in having a chaplain offer a daily invocation on grounds that the religious diversity of the delegates would prevent any one prayer from being all-inclusive, even they came to realize that their fears has been misplaced. Men of dissimilar backgrounds, delegates largely unknown to one another, had found common ground in reasoned, timely prayer in tacking uncharted waters. That first public prayer, given its tone, potency, and setting, created an important precedent, one continued by both houses of Congress into the Twenty-First Century.

This excerpt is drawn from *One Nation Under God: The History of Prayer in America* by James P. Moore, Jr. published on November 1, 2005. More information can be found on <http://www.1nug.com/>.

## **Energetic Present**

### **PRAYER REQUESTS**

As the members of the 9/11 Commission have warned that the nation is ill-prepared for another terrorist attack, pray for the President and the Congress as they continue to respond to these concerns, that they will be diligent in making the changes to our nation's communication, security and travel systems to keep us safe from future attacks.

Pray for the President as he continues to lead as Commander-in-Chief of our troops in Iraq, asking God to give him strength and wisdom as he leads. Pray that our nation will be unified in spite of the controversy surrounding the war.

Pray for Secretary of Health and Human Services Mike Leavitt as he works with government leaders to prevent an outbreak of avian flu in our nation and the world. Pray for wisdom for all who are working to prevent this disaster.

Pray against the tremendous spiritual confusion in our nation that prohibits children from observing Christmas in public school while embracing traditions of other faiths and secular culture. Pray that the God

in whom our Founders trusted as they fought for our freedom will be honored and revered in all the celebrations taking place this December.

As the December 15 date for elections in Iraq approaches and insurgent attacks mount, pray that the Iraqi people will seize this opportunity for freedom and democracy, and pray that insurgent plots will cease.

As recent studies have shown that collegians tend to lose their faith gradually by the end of their junior year, pray for the students of our nation to remain faithful and committed to God throughout their education. Pray also for those who minister on college campuses to be empowered to help and strengthen students in resisting the many influences, both social and intellectual, that would defeat them spiritually.

Pray for the members of the Senate as they return to Washington Monday, December 12 and for the members of the House who have returned this week, asking God to grant them help and insight as they deal with a variety of issues before the Christmas recess. Pray that the Christian heritage of our nation will be protected and preserved as our legislators govern.

As criticism of the war in Iraq continues to mount, pray against the division and dissension spreading across our nation asking God to dispel critical reports and raise up voices of reason that call for support of the spread of democracy and freedom for the Iraqi people. Pray for wisdom for military leaders who lead our brave troops, and pray that the evil intent of insurgents attacking innocent people will be defused. Pray for safety and protection for all troops serving around the world during these difficult days.

## Challenging Future

### WORDS FROM THE PRESIDENT ON OUR EFFORT IN IRAQ

*"I know we're going to win, and our troops need to hear, not only are they supported, but that we have a strategy that will win. Oh, there's pessimists, you know, and politicians who try to score points. But our strategy is one that will lead us to victory. The only thing that the enemy has got going for them is the capacity to take innocent life and to get on our TV screens with this devastation that they cause. These people cannot stand free societies. They have no regard for the human condition. They'll kill women and children at the drop of a hat, all aimed at frightening the American people and trying to get us to withdraw. And if we were to withdraw, the likes of Zarqawi, who is a sworn ally of bin Laden, would have a safe haven from which to plot and plan."*

– George W. Bush

Serving God and Country,

*Chaplain Ken*

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