

November 25, 2005

Dear Friend:

Glorious Past

OUR NATION'S GODLY HERITAGE

Governor John Winthrop's Vision for New England

Indeed, those who first came to the shores of our great nation knew that God had guided them and was leading them in every step of their journey. One such leader was Governor John Winthrop who came to New England aboard the *Arabella* in 1630. Pursuing his passion to honor God and serve Him faithfully, Winthrop worked to found the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Settling in Boston, just to the north of the first settlement at Plymouth Colony, Winthrop and his fellow Puritans wanted to create the perfect society of people in fellowship with one another and with God. His vision is summed up in these words: "*For we must consider that we shall be as a City upon a Hill. The eyes of all people are upon us. So that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause Him to withdraw his present help from us, we shall be made a story and a byword throughout the world.*"

– John Winthrop, Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, 1630

PRESIDENTIAL QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"It has long been the pious custom of our people, with the closing of the year, to look back upon the blessings brought to them in the changing course of the seasons and to return solemn thanks to the all-giving source from whom they flow. Our nation still lies in the shadow of a great bereavement, and the mourning which has filled our hearts still finds its sorrowful expression toward the God before whom we but lately bowed in grief and supplication, yet the countless benefits which showered upon us during the past twelve-months call for our fervent gratitude and make it fitting that we should rejoice with thankfulness that the Lord in His infinite mercy has most signally favored our country and our people. For all these things, it is meet that the voice of the nation should go up to God in devout homage."

– President Chester Arthur, 1881

"Rarely has any people enjoyed greater prosperity than we are now enjoying. For this we render heartfelt and solemn thanks to the Giver of Good; and we seek to praise Him not by words only – but by deeds, by the way in which we do our duty to ourselves and to our fellow men."

– Theodore Roosevelt, Thanksgiving 1902

President Abraham Lincoln's Presidential Proclamation for Thanksgiving Day, 1863

"The year that is drawing towards its close, has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God."

In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign States to invite and to provoke their aggression, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere

except in the theatre of military conflict; while that theatre has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union.

Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defense, have not arrested the plough, the shuttle, or the ship; the axe had enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased, notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege and the battle-field; and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years with large increase of freedom.

No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy. It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and voice by the whole American People. I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens.

And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to his tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility and Union."

– Abraham Lincoln

ONE NATION UNDER GOD: THE HISTORY OF PRAYER IN AMERICA

PRAYER FOR A SON

The Incredible Story of Calvin Coolidge's Prayer-Bathed Swearing In

The news came suddenly. Less than three years into his term, President Warren Harding's unexpected death left Calvin Coolidge, his vice president, as the new Commander-in-Chief. Learning the news that Harding had just died at 2:30 am while vacationing on his farm in Vermont, Calvin Coolidge later recounted, "My wife and I dressed at once. Before leaving the room I knelt down and, with the prayer with which I have since approached the altar of the church, asked God to bless the American people and give me power to serve them." Coolidge, who for many years attended the same Congregational church in Northampton, Massachusetts, where Jonathan Edwards had served as minister, seemed to political pundits of the day be the polar opposite of his predecessor, one of his most famous sayings being that "character is the only sure foundation of the state."

Coolidge's wife Grace was his strong, unflinching partner, perhaps the most stylish First Lady to occupy the executive mansion since Dolly Madison. She was also an amateur poet. When the Coolidge's son Calvin, Jr. died at the age of sixteen in 1924 from blood poisoning, his death was a terrible blow to both of them. Coming as it did one month before Coolidge would be nominated on his own as the Republican candidate for president, the confluence of events was at times overwhelming. Some believed that Calvin Coolidge never recovered fully from his depression.

To remember her remarkably gentle son, Grace Coolidge wrote a heartrending poem in which she saw Calvin, Jr., in death as a guide to her own prayers and to her ultimate union with God. She called it "The

Open Door,” and it would be printed in every major newspaper across the country as Americans everywhere grieved for her and the President.

You, my son,
Have shown me God.
Your kiss upon my cheek
Has made me feel the gentle touch
Of Him who leads us on.
The memory of your smile, when young,
Reveals His face,
As mellowing years come on apace.
And when you went before,
You left the gates of heaven ajar
That I might glimpse,
Approaching from afar,
The glories of His grace.
Hold, son, my hand,
Guide me along the path,
That, coming,
I may stumble not,
Nor roam,
Nor fail to show the way
Which leads us home.

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

Now that President and Mrs. Bush have returned to Washington from their trip to Asia, pray for the follow-up to the trip, that the key issues discussed and debated will be enacted in a manner that honors God and works to bring greater health, peace and freedoms to the peoples of the world.

As President Bush worshiped with Chinese Christians as a prelude to addressing the issue of religious freedom in that nation, pray that this grave concern will be addressed for all Chinese, and pray that all members of the Church in China will be protected and strengthened in their faith.

Pray for President and Mrs. Bush as they celebrate Thanksgiving at their Crawford Ranch asking God to give them and their guests His peace and rest. Pray that they will have many moments of genuine gratitude and great enjoyment with family and friends in preparation for their return to Washington.

As rebuilding continues in New Orleans and all the hurricane-affected areas of the Gulf Coast, pray for those who remain homeless and for those who face difficult decisions to return and rebuild or to relocate. Pray for rebuilding efforts to move efficiently and to help those most in need. Pray particularly for the culture of the rebuilt communities to project reliance on God and a desire to honor His values. Pray that help and support will come to aid of those needing it.

Pray for the members of Congress as they enjoy Thanksgiving recess, asking God to bless each one with renewal and refreshment, preparing them to return to Washington and deal with the nation’s legislative

concerns with great wisdom and foresight. As they speak with their constituents, pray that those exchanges will be productive and helpful, leading to effective representation and legislation. Pray also for a moderation of recent divisive debates.

Give thanks for the agreements made at the APEC conference regarding avian influenza, including collaboration in reporting of animal and human avian influenza cases and the timely sharing of data and lab samples; response to outbreaks to prevent or contain a pandemic; planning assessments; development protocols for the continuity of essential services, business, and trade; and support for international partnerships on avian flu. Pray that each country involved will be diligent in preparing for and preventing a flu pandemic.

Pray for Judge Samuel Alito as he continues the get-acquainted process on Capitol Hill, asking God to guide members of the Senate Judiciary Committee who will conduct hearings set to begin in December. Pray that God's will is done in the entire process.

As the nation pauses to celebrate Thanksgiving this week, pray that gratitude and praise to Almighty God will rise from the hearts of all Americans, thanking God for His blessings on our nation as well as for the privilege of knowing and belonging to Him.

Pray for our troops in Iraq, as pressure to withdraw from the massive effort there mounts, asking God to encourage each one in their noble effort to aid that nation in its quest for freedom and democracy. Pray that they will know the encouragement and support of their grateful nation and that the continued exchange regarding withdrawal of troops will be civil and dignified.

THOUGHTS ON HOW TO OBSERVE THANKSGIVING

Count your blessings instead of your crosses;
Count your gains instead of your losses.
Count your joys instead of your woes;
Count your friends instead of your foes.
Count your smiles instead of your tears;
Count your courage instead of your fears.
Count your full years instead of your lean;
Count your kind deeds instead of your mean.
Count your health instead of your wealth;
Count on God instead of yourself.
– Anonymous

A THANKSGIVING PRAYER

by Rev. Greg Asimakoupoulos

I'm thankful for a work-free day
and that I'm free to freely say
how grateful God I am for You
and all that You provide.

With pilgrim praise I offer thanks
for living in a land that ranks
the very best in all the world.
God, bless the USA.

Appreciation fills my heart
to know our nation's played a part
in helping countries find their feet
when life has laid them flat.

I'm thankful for our President
and for the hours he has spent
to help disaster victims cope
as they rebuild their lives.

I'm thankful he's a man of prayer
who doesn't flinch in face of terror
but willingly will close his eyes
requesting wisdom's ways.

Be near him, Lord, as he reviews
the daily headlines of the news.
And give him grace to gratefully
acknowledge Your control.

Challenging Future

WORDS FROM THE PRESIDENT ON THANKSGIVING

Thanksgiving Day, 2005
A Proclamation by the President of the United States of America

Thanksgiving Day is a time to remember our many blessings and to celebrate the opportunities that freedom affords. Explorers and settlers arriving in this land often gave thanks for the extraordinary plenty they found. And today, we remain grateful to live in a country of liberty and abundance. We give thanks for the love of family and friends, and we ask God to continue to watch over America.

This Thanksgiving, we pray and express thanks for the men and women who work to keep America safe and secure. Members of our Armed Forces, state and local law enforcement, and first responders embody our Nation's highest ideals of courage and devotion to duty. Our country is grateful for their service and for the support and sacrifice of their families. We ask God's special blessings on those who have lost loved ones in the line of duty.

We also remember those affected by the destruction of natural disasters. Their tremendous determination to recover their lives exemplifies the American spirit, and we are grateful for those across our Nation who answered the cries of their neighbors in need and provided them with food, shelter, and a helping hand.

We ask for continued strength and perseverance as we work to rebuild these communities and return hope to our citizens.

We give thanks to live in a country where freedom reigns, justice prevails, and hope prospers. We recognize that America is a better place when we answer the universal call to love a neighbor and help those in need. May God bless and guide the United States of America as we move forward.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE W. BUSH, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 24, 2005, as a National Day of Thanksgiving. I encourage all Americans to gather together in

their homes and places of worship with family, friends, and loved ones to reinforce the ties that bind us and give thanks for the freedoms and many blessings we enjoy.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this eighteenth day of November, in the year of our Lord two thousand five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirtieth.

GEORGE W. BUSH

Serving God and Country,

Chaplain Ken

Rev. Kenneth L. Beale, Jr., *D. Min.*

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