

No 2776

National Day of Prayer and Remembrance
National Cathedral
Washington, D.C.
Friday, September 14, 2001

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National Day of Prayer and Remembrance
National Cathedral
Washington, D.C.
Sunday, September 14, 2003

President And Mrs. Bush

2776

Prayer ... 2

- - Thank you, Mr. President for calling this day of prayer and remembrance.
- - We come together today to affirm our conviction that God cares for us whatever our ethnic, religious or political background may be.
- The Bible says that He is "the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles"
(2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

Prayer...3

-- Jesus said, "Blessed are those
who mourn, for they will be
comforted" (Matthew 5:4).

-- No matter how hard we try,
however, words simply cannot
express the horror, shock, and
revulsion we all feel over what
took place in this nation on
Tuesday morning.

- Those blasts were like violent explosions ripping at the heart of America.
- September 11 will go down in our history as a day to remember.
- Today we say to those who masterminded this cruel plot, and to those who carried it out, that the spirit of this nation will not be defeated by their twisted and diabolical schemes.

-- Some day those responsible will
be brought to justice, as
President Bush and our Congress
have so forcefully stated.

-- The wounds are deep

-- but the courage, faith, and
determination of the
American people are even
deeper.

-- But today we especially come together in this service to confess our need of Almighty God and to seek His comfort and help for the days ahead.

-- May the Bible's words be our hope: "God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea"

(Psalm 46:1,2)

-- But how do we understand something like this?

-- Why does God allow an evil like this to take place?

-- / Perhaps that is what you are asking right now.

-- You may even be angry at God.

-- I want to assure you that God understands those feelings.

-- God can be trusted, even when
life seems at its darkest.

-- / But what are some of the lessons
we can learn from this tragedy?

-- ~~How do we understand it?~~

-- First, we are reminded of the
mystery and reality of evil.

-- I have been asked on hundreds of occasions why God allows tragedy and suffering.

-- I have to confess that I have never fully answered that, even to my own satisfaction.

-- I have to accept, by faith, that God is sovereign, and He is a God of love and mercy and compassion even in the midst of suffering.

-- I remember ~~as a young man~~ lying
on the dirt floor of a field
hospital in Korea and looking up
into the face of a soldier
suspended in a frame who was
horribly wounded, ^{and dying} and asking
myself "Why?"

-- The Bible says God is not the
author of evil, and it speaks of
evil as a "mystery"
(2 Thessalonians 2:7).

Prayer...11

-- The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah said, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

-- That is one reason we each need God in our lives.

-- Times like ~~this will do one~~ of ~~two things:~~

Prayer...12

-- But the lesson of this event is not only about the mystery and reality of evil,

-- but second, it is a lesson about our need for each other.

-- What an example New York and Washington have been to the world these past few days!

- None of us will ever forget the pictures of our courageous firefighters and police, many of whom had lost friends and colleagues
- or the hundreds of people standing patiently in line to donate blood.
- We have seen an outpouring of sympathy and help not only all over our nation, but from around the world.

Prayer...14

-- We have been reminded that a
cruel event like this which so
vividly demonstrates the depths
of human evil, also brings out
the best in us of human
compassion and sympathy and
sacrifice.

-- A tragedy like this could have
torn this country apart
-- but instead it has united us and
we have become a family.

-- I think this was exemplified in a very moving way when the members of our Congress stood shoulder to shoulder the other day and sang, "God Bless America."

Finally, difficult as it may be for us to see right now -- this event can give us a message of hope -- hope for the present, and hope for the future.

-- Yes, there is hope.

Prayer...16

-- There is hope for the present because I believe the stage has already been set for a new spirit in our nation.

-- One of the things we desperately need is a spiritual renewal and revival and, strange as it may seem, this may be the beginning of a new era in our country, as we realize in a deeper way our need of God and each other.

Prayer... 17

-- Today let every one of us
rededicate ourselves to a new
spirit of brotherhood and
compassion, working together to
solve the problems and overcome
the barriers that would tear us
apart -- not just here, but
around the world.

-- But there also is hope for the
future because of God's promises.

Prayer...18

- As a Christian, I have hope not just for this life, but for Heaven and the life to come.
- I pray that you will have this hope in your heart.
- This event reminds us of the brevity and uncertainty of life.
- We never know when we too will be called into eternity.

Prayer...19

-- I doubt if even one of those people who got on those planes, or who walked into the World Trade Center or the Pentagon last Tuesday morning thought it would be their last day on earth.

-- That is why we each need to face our own spiritual need and commit ourselves to God and His will now.

- Here in this majestic National Cathedral we see all around us the symbol of the Cross.
- For the Christian, the Cross tells us that God understands our sin and suffering, for He took them upon Himself in the person of Jesus Christ.
- From the Cross, God declares, "I love you, and I know the heartaches and the sorrows and the pain you feel."

Prayer...24

- But the story does not end with the Cross, for Easter points us beyond the tragedy of the Cross to the empty tomb.
- It tells us that there is hope for eternal life, for Christ has conquered evil and death, and hell.
- This is our hope.

-- Several years ago at the
National Prayer Breakfast in
Washington, Ambassador Andrew
Young (who had just gone through
the tragic death of his wife),
closed his talk with a quote
from the old hymn "HOW FIRM A
FOUNDATION..."

ILL:

-- We all watched in horror as planes crashed into the steel and glass of the World Trade Center. Those majestic towers built on solid foundations were examples of the prosperity and creativity of our people.

-- When damaged, those buildings eventually plummeted to the ground imploding in on themselves.

- Yet, underneath the debris is a foundation that was not destroyed.
- Therein lies the truth of that old hymn – How Firm a Foundation.
- Our nation has been attacked, buildings destroyed and lives lost – and now we have a choice - whether to implode and disintegrate emotionally, and spiritually as a people and a nation.

-- Or whether to choose to become
stronger through all of this struggle –
to re-build on a strong foundation.

-- That foundation is our trust in
Almighty God – and in that faith,
we have the strength to endure
something as difficult and horrendous
as what we have experienced this
week.

-- And in the words of that familiar
hymn:

“Fear not, I am with Thee;

O be not dismayed,

For I am thy God,

and will still give thee aid;

I’ll strengthen thee, help thee,

and cause thee to stand, upheld by my

righteous, omnipotent hand.”

-- My prayer today is that we will feel
the loving arms of God wrapped
around us and we will know in our
hearts that He will never forsake us as
we trust in Him.