

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Mr. Anthony Hixon
U.N. Meditation Group

Some two hundred years ago, the Second Continental Congress set aside a Thursday in July as a National Day of Prayer.

We thank you all very much for participating in our observance of this occasion.

We thank Sri Chinmoy for his silent offering.

Now I would like to welcome the distinguished clergy and invite them to join together in silent prayer.



Reverend Dr. Grant Anderson

— photo by Lloyd Hart

PRAYERS OF PARTICIPATING CLERGY

Reverend Dr. Grant F. Anderson

*Executive Director, Queens Federation of
Churches*

You have already heard reference made to the fact that the Second Continental Congress of these United States called for a National Day of Prayer. However, prior to that event, history reports that two hundred years ago at the First Continental Congress of this country, at Carpenter's Hall in Philadelphia, the first action was to begin their session with prayer. They invited the Reverend Jacob Duche, the rector of the Christ Church and St. Peter's in Philadelphia, to be the Chaplain and to lead the Congress in prayer. In doing that, he read

from the Old Testament Psalms 35 and 36 and then offered prayer.

Today, by declaration and proclamation of the President of the United States, Gerald R. Ford, this is the National Day of Prayer. It is hoped that on this day prayers may be presented and offered to the Eternal, that they will help the people of the United States to renew their sense of dedication to the Eternal. It is in that spirit that we come together today.

Reverend Kenneth Folkes
*President, Council of Churches of the City
of New York*

—Fully conscious of the words of the Bible, "Righteousness exalteth a nation."

—Conscious of the importance which the Founding Fathers of this nation based on our reliance as a nation upon God,

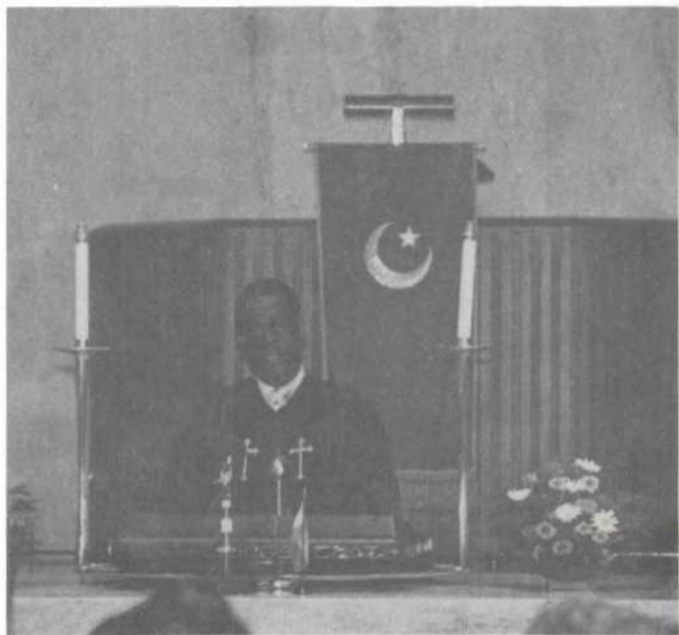
—And further conscious of what God has done for this nation, it is fitting that on this Day of National Prayer leading up to the celebration of the Bicentennial of this country, we recognize how much we are in need of the continued guiding Hands of God, not only in the destiny of this nation, but in the life of each of its citizens.

We pause this afternoon, fully conscious of the promise that God has made that whatsoever we ask, and believe in, shall be granted to us.

And so with assurance, although the signs of the times may not grant us that confidence, assured of the ever-present

guidance in our lives and in the things we attempt to do, we go forward with boldness, not only today but all the days unto the closing of this grand celebration,

— Conscious of the fact that the God that has brought us this far will continue to lead this nation into paths of righteousness, into the fulfillment of all that is good and great.



Reverend Kenneth Folkes

photo by Lloyd Hart

Rabbi Samuel Geffen
New York Board of Rabbis

Prayer has been a tradition since the days of Abraham. It has always been a most important element in the make-up of human beings, who in their nature felt the need to communicate with the Almighty, Creator of all humanity. At times prayer was uttered in the briefest manner, as we find Moses praying on behalf of his sister Miriam in her affliction. In his deeply sincere prayer for healing, Moses uttered five Hebrew words—*El ma refa na lah*, "Heal her now, O God, I beseech Thee." His prayer to God was heard and Miriam was healed.

There are long, formal prayers and there are words directed Heavenward, few and informal. We believe with absolute faith that our prayers are effective and will be heard.

We pray in thanksgiving to God for our daily blessings. We pray for a world of peace



photo by Lloyd Hart

Rabbi Samuel Geffen

and happiness for all mankind. In this United Nations Church Center, where gather the representatives of the many nations of the world, we pray for understanding, for tolerance, for brotherhood, for friendship. We pray for an end to all conflict and strife. Yes, here within the heart of all humanity we can hope for the realization of our prayers.

O God, Father of all the children of the world, hearken to our prayers. Grant us our most cherished desire—fill our hearts with love for Thee and for all our fellowmen. Bless us and keep us. Cause Thy countenance to shine upon us and be gracious to us. Lift up Thy countenance unto us and grant us *Shalom*, everlasting peace, forever and ever.

Amen

Venerable Lozang Jamspal
Lamaist Buddhist Monastery of America

Today is a special day for the American people. On this occasion, I pray for the peace and happiness of the American and the other peoples of the world.

Invocation from the *Prajnaparamita Sutra* :

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ।

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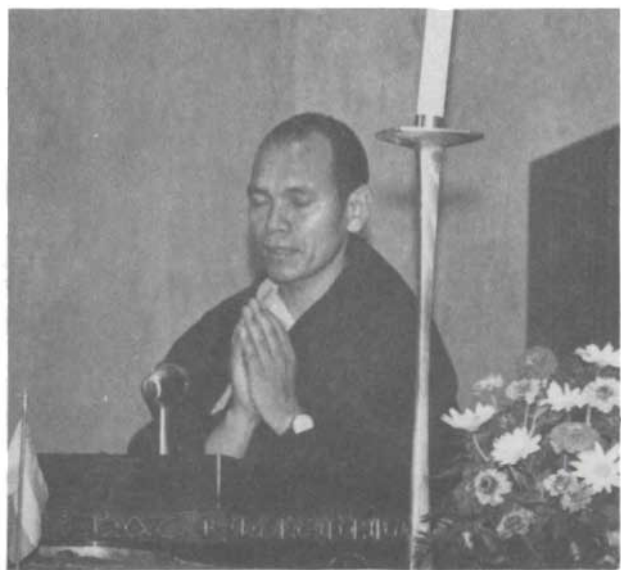


photo by Lloyd Hart

Venerable Lozang Jampal

I salute the Mother of the Conquerors (Buddhas) of the three times—past, present and future—the perfection of Wisdom that is beyond conceptual knowledge and that is the object of noble meditative knowledge, the sphere of activity of the Wisdom of Reality.

Mantra of the perfection of Wisdom
from the conclusion of the *Heart Sutra*:

Tadyatha OM GATE GATE
PARAGATE PARASAMGATE
BODHI YE SVAHA

That is to say, OM, gone,
gone, gone beyond to Enlightenment, hail!

(Final Prayer)

May all obstructions be pacified.
May all human disease and
harmfulness cease.
May all unhappiness be dispelled,
And may there be prosperity in
the world for human beings.

Reverend Robert Kennedy
*Director of Social Action, Brooklyn Diocese,
Roman Catholic Church*

Two hundred years ago, the Second Continental Congress called upon the inhabitants of all the Colonies to unite on a designated Thursday in July in "humiliation, fasting and prayer." Americans on that day were asked to address their prayers to the "Great Governor of All the World" to preserve their new Union and to secure religious and civil liberties.

The colonists had come a great way from the first meeting in September. The force of events had moved the colonists from a simple boycott of British goods to the battles of Lexington, Concord and Bunker Hill. The Second Continental Congress became the central government for the thirteen parliaments. It began to function as a government, giving direction to the yet undeclared revolution. It had many things

to do. The first thing was to call upon all its citizens to pray.

We are here today because the Congress of the United States, meeting in its ninety-second session, has asked us to come to pray. The President has designated today as the day when we are asked to continue with the tradition that is long a part of our history—asking God for wisdom to continue the American pilgrimage, striving towards a nobler existence for all humanity. And so we are to ask for strength to meet the challenges that face our nation, to give thanks to God for the many blessings America has received throughout the centuries and to express our hope that our lives may continue to be enriched by the grace of our Maker.

It is a rather solemn and challenging appeal for our prayers. As a nation, we truly have much to be thankful for. We have come a long way in the quest for human freedom and justice. But we still have a long way yet to go. The political freedom that was wanting two centuries ago still has to be translated in terms of economic freedom for many of our citizens; and freedom from discrimination in so many ways is lacking. The justice that we share

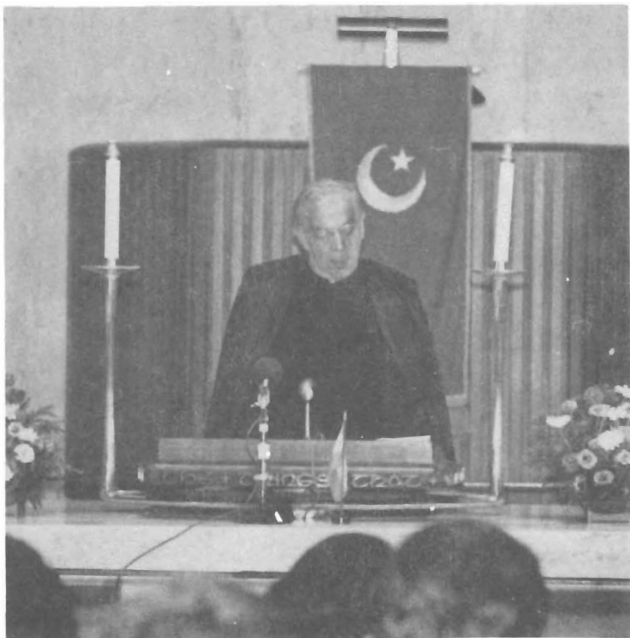


photo by Lloyd Hart

Reverend Robert Kennedy

with our fellow citizens still has many things that it must achieve. We have gone far with God's help. And so we gather to make the most of this day of prayer, so that with His help, we may continue as a nation, as a people and as individuals to make even greater progress in achieving that great ideal of human justice and human freedom for ourselves, henceforth.

Father Stephen Kyriacou

*Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and
South America*

Let us pray to the Lord:

O Heavenly King, Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, God Almighty, the Father of all men, come and take up Your Abode in us. Bless us and this nation abundantly. Be with us now as You were with the Second Continental Congress two hundred years ago,

Inspiring us to rise up to the challenge that Truth places before us—

To remold ourselves to Your likeness;
To be renewed in Your Holy Spirit;
To reach out to the oppressed, the poor, the suffering, the hungry, the homeless in our nation and around the globe;

To give thanks that You are with us, for it is Your Will that must be done, not ours; we are citizens of Your Kingdom, none other.

Strengthen our leaders to pursue justice, not power, for strength lies in You, not in the brute force of arms.

We pray for the strength to continue the pilgrimage, that America be cleansed of our tarnished sense of justice, our confused sense of morality, our short-sightedness of freedom.

Let this be a new day, a day of resurrection, a day of renewal.

For You bless and sanctify all things, and to You we offer our thanks, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever.

Amen



photo by Lloyd Hart

Father Kyriacou

Catherine Mboya

Baha'i International Community

I want to share with you a prayer used by the Baha'i appropriately titled, *O Kind Lord!*

O Kind Lord! Thou Who art generous and merciful! We are the servants of Thy threshold and we are under the protection of Thy mercy. The Sun of Thy providence is shining upon all and the clouds of Thy mercy shower upon all. Thy gifts encompass all. Thy providence sustains all, Thy protection overshadows all and the glances of Thy favor illumine all. O Lord! Grant unto us Thine infinite bestowals and let Thy light of guidance shine. Illumine the eyes, make joyous the souls and confer a new spirit upon the hearts. Give them eternal life. Open the doors of Thy knowledge, let the light of faith shine. Unite and bring all men into one shelter beneath the banner of Thy protection, so that they may



—photo by Lloyd Hart

Catherine Mboya

become as waves of one sea, as leaves and branches of one tree, and may assemble beneath the shadow of the same tent. May they drink from the same fountain. May they be refreshed by the same breezes. May they obtain illumination from the same source of light and life. Thou art the Giver, the Merciful!

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Muddassir Ali Shamsee

Muslim Prayer Group, United Nations

*Allah-humma anta-as-salaam,
wa minka-as-salaam, wa ilaika
yerje-us-salaam; hayenna Rab-
bana bil salaam, wa adkhilna
dar-as-salaam; tabarakta Rab-
bana wa ta a'leta, ya Zaljalale
wal Ikram!!* *Amen!*

These words are commonly used by Muslims, the world over, five times a day, after each compulsory prayer. In these words of the Prophet Mohammed, may he rest in peace, the Muslims pray:

"O Lord, peace is You (that is to say, You are the ultimate Giver of Peace). All peace and security derive from You. O our Lord, grant us to live in peace, and (later) enter us into the Abode of peace (which is Heaven). Blessed are You, our Lord, great are You, full of Majesty, Bounty and Honor."

Amen!

The importance of peace in Islam is evident not only from this prayer, but even from the name of the religion itself. The word 'Islam' is from the same root as 'salaam' or 'Shalom', which roughly mean 'peace'. In the Islamic sense it means the submission of man to God, the subordination of all interests to the universal interest, and thereby the arriving at inner peace, as well as peace in one's own society and the world at large. That is to say, being governed individually, socially and internationally by the Laws of God brings about Ultimate Peace. But this peace is achieved not merely through an internal process, but basically by people joining together and working hard to bring it about within the framework of divine laws indicated in the Quran.

To strike at the root of ideas which foster war, such as ethnocentricity, racialism, nationalism, religious bigotry, Quran clearly states that (i) mankind is *one family* which is divided into tribes and nations *only to tell one from the other*; otherwise, the better amongst men is the one who obeys his Lord most rigorously (XLIX: 13); and that (ii) the followers of all prophets of God are *one community* (XXIII: 51).



Muddassir Ali Shamsee

In conclusion, I pray again: "O Lord, unite us in Your love and make us thankful for what You have so generously given us. And grant us, O Lord, the courage of our convictions. Give us world leaders who are able to rise above narrow interests and work for the universal good through their communities and their peoples."

Reverend Dr. Dan Potter
*Executive Director, Council of Churches of
New York*

Many of us gathered here today believe that God is on the throne of history. He has monitored the wanderings of His human race through many countries, through many centuries, through many continents, many nationalities, many colors and many creeds, since the dawn of His creation.

With the birth of the United States, brought forth in revolution, we believe God instituted the latest among his experiments with human freedom and liberty—conceived in the conviction that all persons are created equal and capable of governing themselves with equal rights and privileges, with responsibilities and rewards for the mutual safety and happiness of the whole family of man.

Now, after two hundred years, we examine how far we have come and how well we have done in this bold adventure in a new way of life.

There is much for which we can thank God and for which we should thank God. His kind providence has protected us from every foreign adversary. Our growth and expansion, our achievements and influence, our inventions and progress have been breathtaking. We have spanned the waters, we have tunnelled the mountains, we have constructed skyscrapers to the heavens and we have shot men to the moon. The list of accomplishments is endless.

We are sincerely thankful to God.

But we see so many shortcomings, so many failures, so many examples of injustice, inequality, discrimination, brutality, pain, suffering and interminable degrading violence to human dignity. We cannot celebrate this Bicentennial without feeling the compelling need to sit in sackcloth and ashes, in penance for our failures to God, as well as our disappointment to our fellow men. Thus many of us are fasting as well as praying this day.

Contrition itself, however, is meaningless unless there is conviction to rise from our penance determined and dedicated to help God fulfil His historic purpose of freedom, liberty and justice in this new Republic. With this determination, we pray to the



Reverend Dr. Dan M. Potter

"Great Governor of the World" that we might serve the wise and gracious purposes of His Providential Government and produce in action, as well as in words, a people bound together in His universal love, peace and freedom, liberty and justice, so that this nation can be recognized among all the nations of the world as truly a *nation under God*.

Sheik Shahabu-d-din

Director, New York Center, Sufi Order

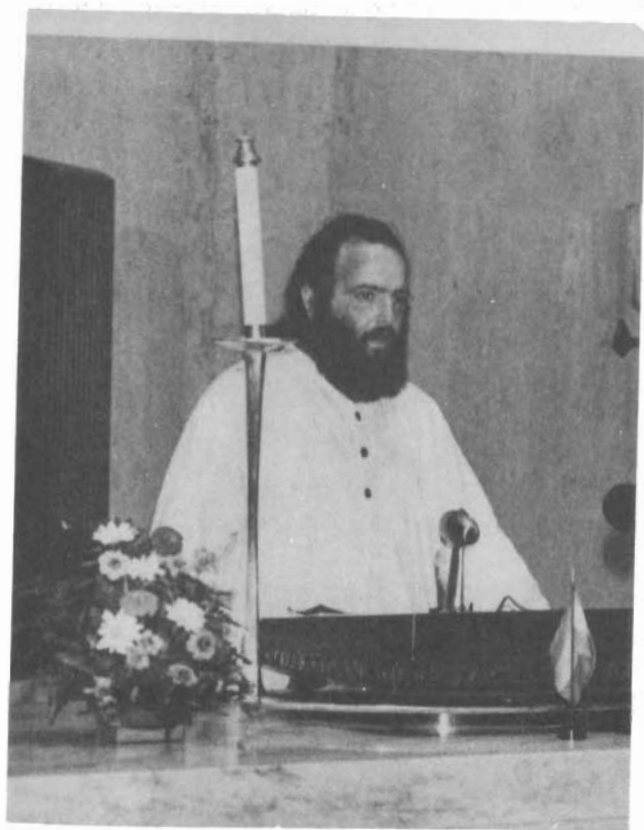
Beloved ones of God, I cannot say much about prayer, because I know so little about it. But I can speak to you about love.

When we pray to God, we pray to a Being outside of ourselves, an entity separate from ourselves. There is an old Sufi story about a man named Shamsi-Tabriz. 'Shams' means 'the son'. Now Shamsi-Tabriz was passing through this kingdom and the king's son had died. The King said, "Bring in Shamsi-Tabriz," and he said to him, "You make my son come back." So Shams went in front of the little boy who was dead and said, "Rise in the name of God." Nothing happened. And then he said, "Rise in the name of 'Shams'" and the little boy stood up and was fine. Now, in one sense, this is blasphemy, but the king couldn't say anything because he got his son back. But Shams looked at him and said, "If I say, 'Rise in the name of

God,' then there's a duality. There's me and there's God outside of me. But when I say, 'Rise in the name of Me,' then I know that I live and move and breathe and have my being in the Lord. And then man will be living."

So if you really wish to make peace in the world, if you really wish to pray, I would say make peace in ourselves, find love in ourselves. Then what we do will have a real effect, since it stems from the heart.

O Thou, Who art the Perfection of Love,
Harmony and Beauty,
The Lord of Heaven and earth,
Open our hearts that we might hear Thy
Voice,
Which constantly cometh from within.
Disclose to us Thy Divine Light which is
hidden in our souls,
That we might know and understand life
better.
Most Merciful and Compassionate God,
Give us Thy great Goodness;
Teach us Thy loving Forgiveness;
Raise us above the distinctions and
differences which divide men;
Send us the Peace of Thy Divine Spirit,
And unite us all in Thy Perfect Being.
Amein. Sum. Amein.



Sheik Shahabu-d-din

CONCLUSION

We started our journey in silence, and I think it would be fitting if we ended this section of our observance by joining together again in silent prayer.

— *Anthony Hixon*