



Focus on Religious Freedom

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Thanksgiving Proclamation – excerpted [New York, 3 October 1789]

By the President of the United States of America

The United States was blessed to be founded by many men and women of great faith. From the Declaration of Independence through the Constitution and Bill of Rights, the doctrine of natural rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, the primacy of the Judeo-Christian ethos, and the belief in a final judgement for each individual are evident. It would then be expected that this new nation would turn in Thanksgiving to God and ask President George Washington to proclaim:

“Whereas it is the duty of all Nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey his will, to be grateful for his benefits, and humbly to implore his protection and favor—and whereas both Houses of Congress have by their joint Committee requested me “to recommend to the People of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer ...

Now therefore I do recommend and assign Thursday the 26th day of November next to be devoted by the People of these States to the service of that great and glorious Being, who is the beneficent Author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be—That we may then all unite in rendering unto him our sincere and humble thanks—for his kind care and protection of the People of this country... for the civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed; ... and in general for all the great and various favors which he hath been pleased to confer upon us.

...and also that we may then unite in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and Ruler of Nations and beseech him to pardon our national and other transgressions—to enable us all, whether in public or private stations, to perform our several and relative duties properly and punctually—to render our national government a blessing to all the people, by constantly being a Government of wise, just, and constitutional laws, discreetly and faithfully executed and obeyed...To promote the knowledge and practice of true religion and virtue, —and generally to grant unto all Mankind such a degree of temporal prosperity as he alone knows to be best.

Given under my hand at the City of New-York the third day of October in the year of our Lord 1789.”

Go: Washington

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