

Congress' Proclamation for Day of Prayer and Thanksgiving (1783)

Historical Background of Document:

Following the signing of the official peace treaty with Great Britain by John Adams, Benjamin Franklin and John Jay, America's war for independence was officially over. When the news reached the shores of America, there was a period of great celebration. To mark the occasion, Congress directed that James Duane, Samuel Huntington, and Samuel Holten prepare a proclamation for prayer and thanksgiving, which Congress approved on October 18, 1783.

Text of Proclamation:

A PROCLAMATION by the United States in Congress assembly:

Whereas it hath pleased the Supreme Ruler of all human events, to dispose the hearts of the late belligerent powers to put a period to the effusion of human blood, by proclaiming a cessation of all hostilities by sea and land, and these United States are not only happily rescued from the dangers distresses and calamities which they have so long and so magnanimously sustained to which they have been so long exposed, but their freedom, sovereignty and independence ultimately acknowledged by the king of Great Britain. And whereas in the progress of a contest on which the most essential rights of human nature depended, the interposition of Divine Providence in our favor hath been most abundantly and most graciously manifested, and the citizens of these United States have every possible reason for praise and gratitude to the God of their salvation.

Impressed, therefore, with an exalted sense of the magnitude of the blessings by which we are surrounded, and of our entire dependence on that Almighty Being, from whose goodness and bounty they are derived, the United States in Congress assembled do recommend it to the several States, to set apart the second Thursday in December next, as a day of public thanksgiving, that all the people may then assemble to celebrate with one voice grateful hearts and united voices, the praises of their Supreme and all bountiful Benefactor, for his numberless favors and mercies.

That he hath been pleased to conduct us in safety through all the perils and vicissitudes of the war; that he hath given us unanimity and resolution to adhere to our just rights; that he hath raised up a powerful ally to assist us in supporting them, and hath so far crowned our united efforts with success, that in the course of the present year, hostilities have ceased, and we are left in the undisputed possession of our liberties and independence, and of the fruits of our own land, and in the free participation of the treasures of the sea; that he hath prospered the labor of our husbandmen with plentiful harvests; and above all, that he hath been pleased to continue to us the light of the blessed gospel, and secured to us in the fullest extent the rights of conscience in faith and worship.

And while our hearts overflow with gratitude, and our lips set forth the praises of our great Creator, that we also offer up fervent supplications, that it may please him to pardon all our offenses, to give wisdom and unanimity to our public councils, to cement all our citizens in the bonds of affection, and to inspire them with an earnest regard for the national honor and interest, to enable them to improve the days of prosperity by every good work, and to be lovers of peace and tranquility; that he may be pleased to bless us in our husbandry, our commerce and navigation; to smile upon our seminaries and means of education, to cause pure religion and virtue to flourish, to give peace to all nations, and to fill the world with his glory.

Done by the United States in Congress assembled, witness his Excellency Elias Boudinot, our President, this 18th day of October, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-three, and of the sovereignty and independence of the United States of America the eighth