

## **A Fourth of July Prayer**

Oh God, on this Fourth of July weekend, we give thanks not only for the gift of Jesus Christ, but also for the gift of life in this country, all the opportunities and safeguards we have enjoyed over the years.

Still, the reality is that in our present uncivil strife we seem to have overlooked the one influence that has made this country such a good place to live, namely, Jesus.

Jesus came to break down the dividing wall or the hostility between groups of human beings. Ephesians 2:14 says it's a done deed. The wall is down, so why all the striving to build new walls? He didn't say, "My way or the highway," he said, "I am the way." He did say "I am the truth," but in saying this he sided with no political party or clique or special interest group who assumes that it knows the truth about a certain matter and no one else does. The only people he sided with were the poor, of whom he was one.

Instead of "One nation under God," it seems at times that we increasingly live in "One nation apart from Christ's influence," a nation that is losing the qualities that have made daily life such a joy – kindness, self-sacrifice, thankfulness, fairness, respect, courtesy, cooperation. Thus, our prayer today is that Jesus escape the confines by which so many, including ourselves at times, try to prevent his influence upon public life.

Free him so that he might powerfully nudge us in the direction of a better way forward. So that his spirit of gentleness and humility might replace mean-spirited motivation. And enable him to work through us in the adventures ahead. Prompt us to rejoice in your sovereignty, deepen our sense of kinship with all human beings, and sustain us in our endeavors to take better care of the only planet we have. Amen

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