

## **NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER**

**Las Cruces, New Mexico**

**May 6, 2010**

Good morning! And what a morning it is... the beginning of the day the Lord has made!

Every year the National Day of Prayer in Las Cruces is one of the high points in our community.

Every year we are formally united in prayer: united with millions in the U.S.A.: from the mountains to the prairies and from sea to shining sea.

And right here in our magnificent and beautiful city of Las Cruces we are one in prayer.

Today we tear down the walls that separate us.

Today we forget the different ways we believe.

Today we put aside the diversity of our worship.

Today we celebrate and make manifest our common faith in the one Father...today we make our prayer on the common ground of our sisterhood and brotherhood.

We pray because our common faith tells us that our God cares for us and listens attentively to his people.

We pray because we know that this caring and loving God will answer our prayers: Jesus told us "ASK AND YOU WILL RECEIVE, KNOCK AND IT SHALL BE OPENED UNTO YOU."

He also said, "WHATEVER YOU ASK THE FATHER IN MY NAME HE WILL GIVE YOU."

We pray together because we share the same concerns, those sinful and negative factors that keep this world from being the place where God is everywhere glorified.

As St. Irenaeus said, "The glory of God is man fully alive!" ...And the fullness of life is the challenge we face...all around us.

Last week in the USA Today we read that of the millennial generation – those who are just entering the work force and graduating from college – 72% say they are more "spiritual" than religious, that they are not affiliated with any particular denomination.

Among the 65% who call themselves Christian are either mushy Christians or Christians in name only.

Most are just indifferent, and the more precisely you try to measure their Christianity the fewer you find committed to the faith.

As a matter of fact the report said that only 15% are actually committed to the faith in full.

65% rarely or never attend worship services.

65% rarely or never pray with others and 38% never pray at all.

67% never read the bible or sacred texts.

Thom Rainer, president of Lifeway Christian Resources, says “We have dumbed down what it means to be part of the Church so much, that it means almost nothing, even to people who already say they are part of the Church.”

Folks, we have our work cut out for us. One of the things we need to do is help people understand what it means to be a disciple of the Lord:

teaching people how to pray

and how to be in a true relationship with the Lord.

Mt. 7:21: “None of those who cry out, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the Kingdom of God, but only the one who does the will of my Father in Heaven. So, we have to make the Lord real in this increasingly secular world. He must be at the center of the lives of all those who call themselves Christian.

It is critical that young people be involved in some community service in which they help people, see how people live, the problems they face.

It is essential, however, that they come back and talk about it and understand that the call of God has to do with not just giving back but that it comes from a deep relationship with Jesus.

We do what he did: clothe the naked, feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, visit the sick and the incarcerated, welcome the stranger and forgive those who have wronged us. Jesus teaches us how best to live our lives.

What I said before, I repeat: we have our work cut out for us. And on this National Day of Prayer we need to make it a priority in our churches that we reach out, especially to our young people to help them have a truer and deeper relationship with the Lord. This is what we are called to do: to hand on the faith.

This reality can overwhelm us. So, I would like to finish this talk with a prayer-poem which struck me very deeply. It was written by a bishop friend of mine, who has since died. I invite you to listen very carefully to this. I think it resonates with some of our recurring anxieties and offers us hope.

A FUTURE NOT OUR OWN  
A prayer / poem by Bishop Kenneth Untener  
for Archbishop Oscar Romero

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It helps, now and then, to step back  
and take the long view.  
The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,  
it is beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of  
the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.  
Nothing we do is complete,  
which is another way of saying  
that the kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said.  
No prayer fully expresses our faith.  
No confession brings perfection.  
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.  
No program accomplishes the church's mission.  
No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about:  
We plant seeds that one day will grow.  
We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.  
We lay foundations that will need further development.  
We provide yeast that produces effects beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything  
and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.  
This enables us to do something,  
and to do it very well.  
It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way,  
an opportunity for God's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results,  
but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.  
We are workers, not master builders,  
ministers, not messiahs.  
We are prophets of a future not our own.

