

The original documents are located in Box 23, “2/15/76 - Remarks at a Prayer Breakfast for Athletes” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

Copyright Notice

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Gerald Ford donated to the United States of America his copyrights in all of his unpublished writings in National Archives collections. Works prepared by U.S. Government employees as part of their official duties are in the public domain. The copyrights to materials written by other individuals or organizations are presumed to remain with them. If you think any of the information displayed in the PDF is subject to a valid copyright claim, please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN....

PRAYER BREAKFAST FOR ATHLETES

FEBRUARY 15, 1976

IT IS AN HONOR AND A SPECIAL PRIVILEGE FOR ME

TO WELCOME TO THE WHITE HOUSE SOME OF THE MOST OUTSTANDING

ATHLETES IN AMERICA TODAY.

~~Altho I never made it in your circle
of skill and eminence and achievement~~

as a young grade school schoolyard
street corner athlete my ambition was to accomplish
what all you have achieved. I admire
excellence and so I congratulate each of
you on that attainment. It's a lofty &
worthy goal.

PRESIDENT KENNEDY ONCE HELD A STATE DINNER
FOR NOBEL PRIZE WINNERS AND SAID THERE HAD NEVER
BEEN SUCH AN EXTRAORDINARY COLLECTION OF TALENT AND
HUMAN KNOWLEDGE AT THE WHITE HOUSE BEFORE, / WITH THE
POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF WHEN THOMAS JEFFERSON DINED ALONE•

I BELIEVE IT IS SAFE TO SAY/THAT NO MORE

OUTSTANDING REPRESENTATION OF ATHLETIC PROWESS HAS

EVER BEEN SEEN HERE BEFORE TODAY.

that you have found us

Betty + I are delighted

YOUR ATHLETIC ABILITIES, HOWEVER, EVEN THOUGH

FAR EXCELLING THOSE OF THE AVERAGE PERSON/OR THE AVERAGE

ATHLETE, / ARE NOT ALL THAT MAKE YOU SPECIAL.

YOU ARE ALSO SPECIAL BECAUSE OF YOUR LOVE
OF GOD AND YOUR FAITH IN HIM -- A LOVE AND A FAITH
I SHARE.

THE APOSTLE PAUL, WRITING TO THE CORINTHIANS,
SAID "THEY WHICH RUN IN A RACE RUN ALL, BUT ONE
RECEIVETH THE PRIZE."

EVERYONE IN THIS ROOM HAS RUN THE RACE.

YOU HAVE RECEIVED THE PRIZE THAT COMES WITH EXCELLENCE.

YOU HAVE TASTED WHAT JIM Mc KAY CALLS "THE THRILL OF VICTORY ,

AND THE AGONY OF DEFEAT."

AND YET, YOU KNOW THAT BECAUSE OF YOUR FAITH,

YOU CAN NEVER REALLY BE DEFEATED. THERE WILL BE

SETBACKS. THERE WILL BE RACES OR MATCHES OR GAMES

YOU WILL NOT WIN. BUT YOU WILL NEVER BE DEFEATED

BECAUSE THE PRESENCE OF GOD IS TOO STRONG IN YOUR LIVES.

IF GOD IS ON YOUR SIDE, AND HE WILL BE / IF YOU
ARE ON HIS, / NO MAN OR WOMAN CAN EVER DEFEAT YOU.

AS THE BIBLE SAYS, "IF GOD BE FOR US, WHO CAN BE

AGAINST US?"

AS PRESIDENT, AND AS ONE WHO HAS BEEN IN
PUBLIC LIFE FOR 27 YEARS, I HAVE HAD MY SHARE OF
POLITICAL VICTORIES. AS A REPUBLICAN IN A DEMOCRATIC-
DOMINATED CONGRESS FOR MOST OF THAT TIME, / I HAVE KNOWN
full
MY SHARE OF DEFEATS ALONG THE WAY, AS WELL.

BUT WHENEVER I AM DISCOURAGED OR DISAPPOINTED

BY THE COURSE OF EVENTS, I KNOW THAT THERE IS A PLACE

I CAN GO FOR SOLACE AND FOR STRENGTH.

THAT KNOWLEDGE IS A SOURCE OF GREAT COMFORT

AND CONSOLATION TO ME.

IT HAS SUSTAINED ME IN THE HOUR OF TRIAL, AND

CHASTENED ME IN THE HOUR OF TRIUMPH AND PRIDE.

I SINCERELY BELIEVE THAT AMERICA IS THE GREAT NATION

IT IS TODAY BECAUSE WE HAVE, FROM THE FIRST, DECLARED

OUR DEPENDENCE ON GOD AND PLACED OUR TRUST IN HIM.

"IN GOD WE TRUST" IS MORE THAN OUR NATIONAL

MOTTO -- IT IS THE TESTAMENT WE HAVE FOLLOWED FROM OUR

EARLIEST DAYS.

THE SPIRIT OF COMPETITION, SO STRONG IN AMERICA
THROUGHOUT ITS HISTORY, HAS BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR MUCH
OF OUR MATERIAL PROGRESS, JUST AS IT HAS BEEN PARTIALLY
RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE IN THE
FIELD OF SPORTS.

BUT THERE IS A HIGHER SPIRIT, A NOBLER SPIRIT /

WHICH PERVADES OUR NATIONAL LIFE AND MAKES THE

QUALITY OF OUR LIVES SO MUCH MORE IMPORTANT TO US / THAN

THE QUANTITY OF OUR POSSESSIONS OR INDIVIDUAL HONORS.

THAT SPIRIT, THAT INFINITE SPIRIT OF HOPE AND
COMPASSION AND LOVE, HAS LIVED THROUGH THE AGES.●
WE ARE FORTUNATE THAT IT HAS DWELT SO LONG AND BLESSED
SO RICHLY THIS LAND AND ITS PEOPLE.●

OUR CONSTANT PRAYER MUST BE THAT THIS SPIRIT
WILL FIND ITS WAY INTO OUR OWN INDIVIDUAL HEARTS, OUR
MINDS, OUR LIVES•

THE DISCIPLINE OF ATHLETICS TEACHES US TO DENY
OURSELVES THOSE THINGS WHICH MIGHT HAMPER OUR
PERFORMANCE ON THE FIELD OF CHALLENGE•

BUT THAT DISCIPLINE TELLS US THAT THE REWARDS
OF OUR SUCCESS WILL FAR OUTWEIGH THE RESTRICTIONS
OF OUR TRAINING●

SO IT IS WITH THE RELIGIOUS LIFE, FOR WHICH
THE ULTIMATE REWARD IS NOTHING LESS THAN A PLACE
IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD●

EACH OF YOU IN THIS ROOM SHARES THAT ULTIMATE GOAL

WITH ME.

EACH OF YOU { FAMOUS AND WEALTHY AND HAPPY

AS YOU MAY BE { KNOWS THAT THE THINGS OF THIS WORLD ARE

FLEETING, THAT "IMMORTALITY" IS NOT SOMETHING A

SPORTSWRITER CAN BESTOW UPON YOU, THAT ALL EARTHLY

THINGS SHALL PASS AWAY.

FOR THIS REASON, YOU HAVE MADE A COMMITMENT
THAT WILL LAST BEYOND THIS MORTAL LIFE INTO THE TRUE REALM
OF IMMORTALITY•

YOU HAVE MADE THE GREAT DECISION TO LIVE YOUR
LIVES IN SUCH A WAY / THAT YOU WOULD REJOICE IN THE
OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE YOUR GOD THROUGH ETERNITY•

YOU ARE PREPARED TO LAY ALL YOUR TROPHIES

AT HIS FEET.

THIS IS A WORTHY AND WONDERFUL GOAL FOR

ALL OF OUR LIVES.

LET US STRIVE ALWAYS TO ACHIEVE IT, SO THAT

WE MAY SAY WITH PAUL, AT THE END OF OUR LIVES,

"I HAVE FOUGHT A GOOD FIGHT, I HAVE FINISHED MY COURSE,

I HAVE KEPT THE FAITH."

END OF TEXT