

The American Presidency Project



John Woolley and Gerhard Peters

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GERALD FORD

XXXVIII President of the United States: 1974-1977

95 - Remarks at an Unveiling Ceremony at the George Washington Masonic National Memorial, Alexandria, Virginia.

February 17, 1975

Tweet

Most worshipful Brother Ellis, most worshipful Brother Fowler, grand masters and other officers of the fraternity, Brothers, and friends:

Let me, at the outset, express my deepest personal gratitude to Brother Ellis for his more than generous observations and comments, and I truly hope that my performance in the future will bear out the comments that he has made concerning the past. I am deeply grateful for those very kind words.

The dedication of this medallion gives me a great personal pleasure and, of course, is an honor that I will always cherish.

When I took my obligation as a master mason--incidentally, with my three younger brothers--I recalled the value my own father attached to that order. But I had no idea that I would ever be added to the company of the Father of our Country and 12 other members of the order who also served as Presidents of the United States.

Masonic principles--internal, not external--and our order's vision of duty to country and acceptance of God as a Supreme Being and guiding light have sustained me during my years of Government service. Today especially, the guidelines by which I strive to become an upright man in Masonry give me great personal strength.

Masonic precepts can help America retain our inspiring aspirations while adapting to a new age. It is apparent to me that the Supreme Architect has set out the duties each of us has to perform, and I have trusted in His will with the knowledge that my trust is well-founded.

As our Nation approaches its 200th anniversary, we do live in very challenging times. It was almost 200 years ago, in the darkest days of our war for independence, that George Washington answered a question that is sometimes asked today. The question is whether things are as bad as some say.

George Washington answered, and I quote: "We should never despair. Our situation before has been unpromising and has changed for the better, so I trust it will again. If new difficulties arise, we must only put forth new exertions and proportion our efforts to the exigency of the times."

Let us today rededicate ourselves to new efforts--as Masons and as Americans. Let us demonstrate our confidence in our beloved Nation and a future that will flow from the glory of the past.

When I think of the things right about America, I think of this order with its sense of duty to country, its esteem for brotherhood and traditional values, its spiritual high principles, and its humble acceptance of God as the Supreme Being.

Today we honor our first President, who was also our first Masonic President.

In a letter in 1798 to the Grand Lodge of Maryland, Washington used some words that are now especially appropriate. Washington told the order that he "conceived it to be the indispensable duty of every American ... to come forward in support of the government of his choice, and to give all the aid in his power towards maintaining that independence which we have so dearly purchased."

Such involvement by every American is as essential today as it was in George Washington's day.

I do express to all of you my deepest thanks for this tribute, and I ask that we resolve together to honor George Washington and America by perpetuating the national heritage he engendered through the principles which guide our order--friendship, morality, and brotherly love.

I thank you very, very kindly.

Note: The President spoke at 12 noon at the unveiling of the Gerald R. Ford Masonic Medallion. In his opening remarks, he referred to Raymond Ellis, president, and Marvin Fowler, executive secretary of the memorial.

Citation: Gerald R. Ford: "Remarks at an Unveiling Ceremony at the George Washington Masonic National Memorial, Alexandria, Virginia.," February 17, 1975. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=5485>.

Gerald R. Ford
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