

# President Trump's First National Prayer Breakfast Speech: Freedom of Religion Is a Sacred Right

He uttered a profanity—in part because he trailed off script several times—but President Donald Trump's first National Prayer Breakfast speech found a largely receptive audience of faith and political leaders from around the world at the Hilton Hotel in Washington, D.C.

The president spent a large portion of his speech defending religious liberty, which he said must be allowed to flourish if America is to flourish:

Freedom of religion is a sacred right, but also a right under threat all around us, and the world is under serious, serious threat in so many different ways. I've never seen it so much and so openly as since I took the position of president. The world is in trouble, but we're going to straighten it out, OK?

That's what I do. I fix things. We're going to straighten it out.

Believe me, when you hear about the tough phone calls I'm having, don't worry about it. Just don't worry about it. They're tough—we have to be tough. It's fine. We're going to be a little bit tough on folks. We're taken advantage of by every nation in the world, virtually, and it's not going to happen anymore.

It's not going to happen anymore.

We've seen unimaginable violence carried out in the name of

religion—acts of wanton slaughter against religious minorities—horrors on a scale that defy description. Terrorism is a fundamental threat to religious freedom. It must be stopped, and it will be stopped.

It may not be pretty for a while. It will be stopped ...

We have seen peace-loving Muslims brutalized, victimized, murdered and oppressed by ISIS killers. We have seen threats of extermination against the Jewish people. We have seen a campaign of ISIS and genocide against Christians where they cut off heads. Not since the Middle Ages have we seen that. We haven't seen that. The cutting off of heads.

Now they cut off heads, they drown people in steel cages—haven't seen this. Nobody's seen this for many, many years.

All nations have a moral obligation to speak out against such violence. All nations have a duty to work together to confront it and to confront it viciously if we have to. So, I want to express clearly today to the American people that my administration will do everything in its power to defend and protect religious liberty in our land.

America must forever remain a tolerant society where all faiths are respected and where all of our citizens can feel safe and secure. We have to feel safe and secure. In recent days, we have begun to take necessary action to achieve that goal.

Our nation has the most generous immigration system in the world. But there are those that would exploit that generosity to undermine the values that we hold so dear. We need security.

There are those that would seek to enter our country for the purpose of spreading violence or oppressing people based upon their faith or their lifestyle. Not right. We will not

allow a beachhead of intolerance to spread in our nation. You look all over the world, and you see what is happening.

So, in the coming days, we will develop a system that will help ensure that those admitted into our country fully embrace our values of religious and personal responsibility, and that they reject any form of repression and discrimination. We want people to come into our nation, but we want people to love us and love our values, not to hate us and to hate our values.

We will be a safe country. We will be a free country. And we will be a country where all citizens can practice their beliefs without fear of hostility or fear of violence. America will flourish as long as our liberty—and in particular, our religious liberty—is allowed to flourish.

See Trump's speech in the video above.

Immediately after taking the stage, Trump gave some off-the-cuff remarks about Senate Chaplain Barry Black's powerful keynote speech. In suggesting that Black should be reappointed for as long as he wants the job, the president uttered "What the (obscenity)."

See Black's speech in the video below.

Trump was introduced by the longtime friend, Hollywood producer Mark Burnett, which prompted a brief discussion from the president about their friendship and collaboration on *The Celebrity Apprentice*. It also offered a chance for some digs at his replacement on the program, former California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger—in the form of a "call for prayer" for better ratings for the program.

The president is still credited as an executive producer on the program.

U.S. Sens. John Boozman (R-Ark.) and Chris Coons (D-Del.), who

lead the weekly Senate prayer group that created the original National Prayer Breakfast, served as hosts. World Series MVP Ben Zobrist of the Chicago Cubs offered the opening prayer, and MercyMe performed an acoustic version of "I Can Only Imagine."

The National Prayer Breakfast dates back more than 60 years to the Dwight Eisenhower administration. It is sponsored by Congress and the Fellowship Foundation. {eoa}