

National Day of Prayer 2025: Praying for Unity

This year on the National Day of Prayer on Thursday, May 1, we are asking for prayers for Christian Unity.

Jesus himself started the Christian Unity Prayer Movement when He prayed that the believers would be united in Him and united with each other so the world would know that God sent Him (John 17:20-23).

Almost since the beginning of Christianity, believers have quarreled about Christian doctrine and church government. The first Jerusalem Council served as an example of a favorably resolved dispute (Acts 15). However, other disputes resulted in division and treatment of opponents as non-Christians. For example, some Protestants who believe in salvation only through faith will recite many doctrinal differences with Catholics, claiming those make them un-Christian although Catholics do share their belief in salvation only through faith. The critics have forgotten the words of the apostle Paul, "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you" (Rom. 15:7).

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Instead of myriad doctrinal tests, the apostle Paul tells how to know if we are in Christ:

If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. –Romans 10:9–10

In other words, those who are justified by faith and say so are in Christ. If you are in Christ and those with whom you disagree are in Christ, you are united with them in Christ whether you admit it or not.

Although our unity comes through Christ, many denominations and doctrines create a great diversity within the body of Christ. Protestant Lutheran theologian Oscar Cullman said, "Unity in the church . . . is unity in diversity . . . recognizing others in all their variety as true Christians." Catholic Pope Francis has said, "Unity brought by the Spirit can harmonize every diversity." Unity in diversity recognizes the contributions of other streams of Christianity and blends them together in a symphony of harmony. It is a unity of the Spirit, not in doctrine or church government.

The church has come a long way since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when being a Protestant in France or a Catholic in England could be a death sentence. The French Edict of Nantes, in effect for less than a century, and the English Act of Tolerance were important steps toward Paul's admonition to accept brother Christians. The revivalists of the Great Awakening and the second Great Awakening made appeals which transcended their denominations, achieving a forerunner of unity in diversity. The Charismatic movement brought about spiritual unity, as Christians across many denominations shared in the same experiences and often worshiped together.

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Even so, much remains to be done to bring together the body of

Christ. Today one of the worst schisms in the American church has arisen between the social gospel and the evangelical gospel, and the accompanying politicization of faith. We must come together to care for the poor and needy while reaching the lost with the love of Jesus. We must also transcend politics, guiding both of our political parties to embrace Christian policies.

After the Pope sent a historic video of reconciliation to Kenneth Copeland Ministries in 2014 many national and international church leaders have joined together in Christian unity. However, the urgent need to unite the body of Christ now must be communicated from the national leadership of movements and denominations to the local churches. The city fathers must become champions of unity, bringing the body of Christ together to impact their communities.

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The prayer of Jesus in John 17 is not only about unity. It is for unity with a purpose, "So that the world may believe" (John 17:21).

Let us join with Jesus in His prayer for unity on this National Day of Prayer.

Together we can bring Christian transformation to our nation.

Ron Allen is a Christian businessman who is active in ministries spreading a message of reconciliation to God, to men and between believers. He is the founder of American Wake Up Call.