

**PARTICIPANTS
RELIGIOUS BREAKFAST**

The Reverend (Dr.) Charles G. Adams: Hartford Memorial Baptist
Church, Detroit, Michigan

Bishop John Hurst Adams: AME Church & Congress of National Black
Churches, Columbia, South Carolina

The Reverend John O. Alston: Mt. Zion United Methodist Church

Mr. Ray Bakke: leader in urban ministries, Chicago, Illinois

The Reverend Willie Barrow: Operation PUSH, Chicago, Illinois

The Reverend (Dr.) John Binder: General Secretary of the North
American Baptist Conference,
Oakbrook Terrace, Illinois

Bishop Cecil Bishop: Eighth Episcopal District, Temple Hill,
Maryland

Bishop H. Hartford Brookins: AME, Washington D.C.

Dr. Amos C. Brown: San Francisco, California

The Reverend (Dr.) John A. Buehrens: President of the Unitarian
Universalist Association,
Boston Massachusetts

The Reverend (Father) Bill Byron: Georgetown University Jesuit
Community, Washington D.C.

The Reverend (Dr.) Joan B. Campbell: General Secretary of the
National Council of The
Churches of Christ, New
York, New York

Dr. Peggy Cantwell: National Presbyterian Church, Washington D.C.

Bishop Sharon Brown Christopher: United Methodist Church,
Minneapolis, Minnesota

The Reverend Nicholas C. Chun: Korean Presbyterian Church in
America, Los Angeles, California

Sister Bernice Coriel: Daughters of Charity National Health
System, St. Louis, Missouri

Bishop Phillip Cousins: AME, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The Reverend (Father) Robert Drinan: Georgetown University Law
Center, Washington D.C.

Dr. James M. Dunn: Executive Director of the Baptist Joint
Committee, Washington D.C.

The Reverend Thomas White Wolf Fassett: United Methodist Church,
Washington D.C.

The Reverend Walter Fauntroy: Baptist, Washington D.C.

Sister Maureen Fiedler: Co-Director of Catholics Speak Out,
Hyattsville, Maryland

The Reverend Mark Foucart: St. Paul's Lutheran Church,
Walkersville, Maryland

Rabbi Matt Friedman: Congregation House of Israel, Hot Springs,
Arkansas

Rabbi Stephen Fuchs: Ohabai Sholom Congregation, Nashville,
Tennessee

The Reverend Ernest R. Gibson: First Rising Mt. Zion Baptist
Church, Washington D.C.

Rabbi Moshe Gorelik: President of the Rabbinical Council of
America, New York, New York

Rabbi (Dr.) Alfred Gottschalk: President of the Hebrew Union
College-Jewish Institute of
Religion, Cincinnati, Ohio

Bishop William Graves: First District CME Church, Memphis,
Tennessee

Rabbi Rafael Grossman: Baron Hersch Congregation, Memphis,
Tennessee

The Most Reverend Thomas J. Gumbleton: Auxiliary Bishop of
Detroit

Mr. Joe Hacala: Campaign for Human Development, Washington D.C.

Ms. Carolyn Hale: Georgetown, Kentucky

Dr. Richard C. Halverson: Chaplain of the United States Senate

The Reverend (Dr.) Richard Hamm: President and General Minister
of The Christian Church,
Indianapolis, Indiana

The Reverend Otto H. Hentz, S.J.: Georgetown University

Bishop J. Clinton Hoggard: AMEZ, Washington D.C.

Dr. Rex Horne, Jr.: Emmanuel Baptist Church, Little Rock,
Arkansas

Bishop Frederick C. James: AME, Columbia, South Carolina

Dr. J. T. Jemison: Baptist, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

The Reverend E. Edward Jones: Shreveport, Louisiana

The Reverend O.C. Jones: North Little Rock, Arkansas

Dr. Thomas L. Jones: Habitat for Humanity International,
Washington D.C.

The Reverend Fred Kammer, S.J.: President of Catholic Charities,
USA, Alexandria, Virginia

The Reverend Samuel Kendrick: Church of Christ Holiness, USA

Rabbi (Dr.) Norman Lamm: President of Yeshiva University, New
York, New York

Rabbi Eugene Levy: B'nai Israel Temple, Little Rock, Arkansas

Rabbi Mordechai Liebling: Federation of Reconstructionist
Congregations, Wyncote, Pennsylvania

Rabbi David Lincoln: Vice President of the Synagogue Council of
America, New York, New York

Bishop S. C. Madison: United House of Prayer For All People,
Washington D.C.

The Reverend (Dr.) Ed Matthews: Senior Minister of First United
Methodist Church of Little Rock

Sister Maureen McCormack: President of The Loretto Community,
Denver, Colorado

The Reverend Dorothy McKinney-Wright: Presbyterian Assembly,
Washington D.C.

Mr. Forest Montgomery: General Counsel of National Association of
Evangelicals, Washington D.C.

Dr. Otis Moss: Shaker Heights, Ohio

The Most Reverend Francis P. Murphy: Archdiocese of Baltimore

The Reverend Mark Nakagawa: Japanese United Methodist Church,
Sacramento, California

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

August 30, 1993

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
IN PHOTO OPPORTUNITY DURING WHITE HOUSE INTERFAITH BREAKFAST

The State Dining Room

10:03 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Thank you very much. I want to, once again, as the First Lady did, welcome all of you to the White House on behalf of Vice President and Mrs. Gore, and Hillary and myself -- we're delighted to have you all here.

We wanted to make this new beginning, by beginning with a group of religious leaders from all faiths and parts of our country to come here today as we rededicate ourselves to the purposes for which we're called here.

I wanted to make just a couple of brief remarks. We've had an immensely interesting conversation at our table about some of the things which are dividing Americans of faith, as well as those which are uniting them.

I would say to you that I am often troubled as I try hard here to create a new sense of common purpose. All during the election I would go across the country and say that we're all in this together unless we can find strength in our diversity: our diversity of race, our diversity of income, our diversity of region, our diversity of religious conviction; we cannot possibly meet the challenges before us.

That does not mean, in my view, that we have to minimize our diversity, pretend that we don't have deep convictions, or run away from our honest disagreements. It means that we must find a way to talk with respect with one another about those things with which we disagree and to find that emotional, as well as the intellectual freedom to work together when we can.

A couple of days ago, when I was on vacation -- let me say, the most important religious comment made to me this morning was that several of you gave me dispensation for my vacation. (Laughter.) You said I did not need to feel any guilt for taking a little time off, so I appreciate that. (Laughter.)

But I bought a book on vacation called "The Culture of Disbelief" by Steven Carter, a professor at our old alma mater, Hillary's and mine, at the law school. He is, himself, a committed Christian very dedicated to the religious freedoms of all people of faith -- of any faith in the United States. And the subtitle of the book is: "How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion." And I would urge you all to read it, from whatever political as well as religious spectrum you have because at least it lays a lot of these issues out that I am trying to grapple with.

Sometimes I think the environment in which we operate is entirely too secular. That fact that we have freedom of religion doesn't mean we need to try to have freedom from religion. It doesn't mean that those of us who have faith shouldn't frankly admit that we are animated by that faith, that we try to live by it -- and that it does affect what we feel, what we think, and what we do.

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On the other hand, it is very important that, as Americans, we approach this whole area with a certain amount of humility. That we be careful when we say that because we seek to know and do God's will, God is on our side and, therefore, against our opponent. That is important for two reasons: one is, we might be wrong. (Laughter.) After all, we're only human. (Laughter.) The other is that the thing that has kept us together over time is that our Constitution and Bill of Rights gives us all the elbow room to seek to do God's will in our own life and that of our families and our communities. And that means that there will be inevitable conflicts, so that there will never be a time when everything that we think is wrong can also be illegal. There will always be some space there because there will have to be some room for Americans of good faith to disagree.

I think we need to find areas where we can agree and work together on the restoration of religious freedoms acts is a very important issue to me, personally. And this administration is committed to seeing it through successfully. (Applause.) And I think virtually every person of faith in this country without regard to their party or philosophy or convictions on other issues agrees with that; so we are hopeful that that will happen. But there must be other areas in which we can meet together and talk together and work together and, frankly, acknowledge our agreements and our disagreements.

If people of faith treat issues about which they disagree as nothing more than a cause for a screaming match, then we also trivialize religion in our country. (Applause.) And we undermine the ability to approach one another with respect and trust and faith. And I say that not just to those who disagree with me on some of the particularly contentious issues, but also to those who agree with me. Every person in this country who seeks to know and do the will of his or her creator is entitled to respect for that effort. That is a difficult job. Difficult to know, even harder to do. That is hard work.

But people that have that level of depth, that aren't totally carried away by the secular concerns of the moment must, it seems to me, find a way to talk and work with one another if we're ever going to push the common good. We can't pass a health care program without a conviction that this is in the common interest, that over the long run we will all win. If this becomes some battle where I'm trying to slay some dragon of special interest and that's all it is, we'll never get where we want to go. The American people have to open their hearts as well as their minds and figure out -- this is this horrible problem, we have to solve it. But we have to solve it in a way that enables us to be united together.

We can't work our way through a lot of these economic problems unless we frankly admit that we're moving into a new age where no one has all the answers. We may have to modify -- all of us -- our specific policy positions. But our goal should be to enable every person who lives in this country to live up to his or her God-given potential. And if we look at it that way, and frankly admit we're in a new and different era, then we can go forward.

We can't possibly do anything for anybody in this country unless they're willing to also do something for themselves. There has to be a new ethic of personal and family and community responsibility in this country that should unite people across the lines of different faiths and even different political philosophies. And the people of faith in this country ought to be able to say that, so that if you say that you've got to have that sort of revitalization at the grass roots, person by person, that the Democrats can feel comfortable with saying that. No one says "Oh, you're just being a right-winger." It's just simply true. It is

self-evidently true; you cannot change somebody's life from the outside in unless there is also some change from the inside out.

So these are the kinds of things that I've had a lot of time to think about over the last few days. And I have felt in the last several months during my presidency that we oftentimes get so caught up in the battle of the moment, the heat of the moment -- how are you going to answer this charge, and make that change, or deal with this difficulty -- that sometimes we forget that we are all in this because we are seeking a good that helps all Americans. There must be some sense of common purpose and common strength and, ultimately, an end which helps us all, that revels in the fact that there are people who honestly disagree about the most fundamental issues, but can still approach one another with real respect -- without assuming that if you disagree on issue X or Y, you've jumped off the moral and political cliff and deserve to be banished to some faraway place.

So I wanted to have you here today because I wanted you to hear this direct from your President: I wanted to ask you to continue to pray for me and for our administration, and I wanted to invite you to be part of an ongoing dialogue, which we will come back to all of you later on -- talk about how we can continue to involve people who care about their citizenship as well as about their relationship to their God and how we can work through these things.

There are no easy answers to this. The Founding Fathers understood that; that's why they wanted us to have the First Amendment. There are no simple solutions. But I am convinced that we are in a period of historic significance, profound change here in this country and throughout the world, and that no one is wise enough to see to the end of all of it, that we have to be guided by a few basic principles and an absolute conviction that we can recreate a common good in America.

But it's hard for me to take a totally secular approach to the fact that there are cities in this country where the average murderer is now under the age of 16. Now, there may not be a religious answer to the policy question of whether it's a good thing that all these kids can get their hands on semi-automatic weapons. But there certainly is something that is far more than secular about what is happening to a country where we are losing millions of our young people and where they shoot each other with abandon, and now often shoot total strangers for kicks -- shoot at them when they are swimming in the swimming pool in the summertime.

So I believe that we have enormous possibilities. I think we have enormous problems. There will always be some areas of profound disagreement. What I would ask you today to do is to, as I said, to pray for us as we go forward, to be willing to engage in this dialogue, to reach out to others who may disagree with us on particular issues and bring them into the family of America, and to give us a chance to find common ground so that we can build a common good and do what all of us in our own way are required to do. For I believe that each of us has a ministry in some way that we must play out in life -- and with a certain humility, but also with deep determination.

So I thank you for being here. This has been a wonderful morning for me and for all of us. And I ask you to think about these things and to be willing to continue to engage in this dialogue. We have a lot of work to do to lift this country up and to pull this country together and to push this country into the 21st century, and we have serious responsibilities beyond our borders. Every day there is some good news in the press about that. Some of you have been talking about the Middle East -- how many times have we thought we had good news and been disappointed? But better than the

bad. And every day there is some frustration. So we have to go forward with a much deeper sense of shared values and togetherness toward the common good than we've had so far. That is what I seek to do and what I ask for your prayers and guidance and support and involvement -- active involvement -- to achieve.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

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10:15 A.M. EDT