

Text of Johnson's Message

JOHNSON CITY, Tex., Nov. 24 (AP)—Following is the text of a message issued today by President Johnson to members of the armed forces for Thanksgiving Day:

Today Americans of all faiths gather in their homes and places of worship to give thanks for the blessings of our great land.

Not least in their minds and their hearts will be prayers for the valiant members of our armed forces, at home and abroad. We ask of God that He watch over you and give you strength.

The bounty of our land has always been great. It has allowed us to grow and prosper. Our fields are rich. Our cities are vibrant. Our industry and technology have brought to each generation a better way of life. These are the blessings of America.

But there are other blessings as well—and perhaps the greatest is the blessing of freedom. This we cherish above all, for it gives meaning to all the others. And for this we must sacrifice if we wish to enjoy all the rest.

A man does not inherit freedom as he inherits the land.

A man can plow a field, but it will not make him free.

He can harvest a crop, but it will not make him free.

He can build a mansion, but it will not make him free.

To each generation belongs the task of advancing freedom; of guarding it jealously; of nurturing it; of strengthening its institutions. To each generation belongs the task of defending it in its hour of need.

Today you are the guardians and defenders of that freedom in such an hour.

Many of you are spending this Thanksgiving away from your families. Many of you serve under fire in a lonely and dangerous land. Some of your comrades have fallen. We, the people of this nation, want you to know that our thoughts are with you.

Today we do not march in support of your unfinished task. We carry no placards to bolster your cause. We sign no petitions to show you our unity.

But we do much more. Today we raise our voices in a single prayer of thanks for your courage and your dedication.

And that is the most powerful voice of all.

The New York Times

Published: November 25, 1965

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