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Radio Address from Hyde Park on Election Eve, November 4, 1940

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Lovers of peace, lovers of the ways of peace, lovers of the continuation of peace, the American individual and the American family actively seeks peace now more than ever before.

Lovers of liberty, lovers of our Bill of Rights, lovers of our forms of democracy -- we have been willing in bygone years to fight for the retention of each and every one of them when they were assailed. We repeat "Millions for defense but not one cent for tribute"--- any tribute means the surrender of one or all of them.

Because I have prayed for guidance, because you have prayed for your country, and because most of you will exercise your franchise tomorrow, with a thought for your country in your hearts and minds, I, your President, believe that you will find it fitting that as I close, I read to you an old prayer for the nation which asks the guidance of God:

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RADIO ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT

HYDE PARK, N. Y.

NOVEMBER 4, 1940

Once more I am in the quiet of my home in Hyde Park on the eve of Election Day. I wish to speak to you not of partisan politics but of the Nation, the United States of America, to which we all owe such deep and inborn allegiance.

As I sit here tonight with my own family, I think of all the other American families -- millions of families all through the land -- sitting in their own homes. They have eaten their supper in peace, they will be able to sleep in their homes tonight in peace. Tomorrow they will be free to go out to live their ordinary lives in peace -- free to say and do what they wish, free to worship as they please. Tomorrow of all days they will be free to choose their own leaders who, when that choice has been made, become in turn only the instruments to carry out the will of all of the people.

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And I cannot help but think of the families in other lands -- millions of families -- living in homes like our own. On some of these homes, bombs of destruction may be dropping even as I speak to you.

Across the seas life has gone underground. I think I speak the minds of all of you when I say that we thank God that we live in the sunlight and starlight of peace.-- that we are not in war and that we propose and expect to continue to live our lives in peace -- under the peaceful light of Heaven.

My interest has been that of a candidate for office; a public official; and a private citizens.

In every political campaign, the question on which we all finally pass judgment through the ballot box is simply this. "Whom do I think is the candidate best qualified to act as President, or Governor, or Senator, or Mayor, or Supervisor or County Commissioner during the next few years?"

It is that right, the right to determine for themselves who should be their own officers of government, that provides for the people the most powerful safeguard of the democratic form of government. The right to place men in office, and the right to turn them out of office, at definite, fixed dates of election, is the right which will keep a free people always free.

Dictators have forgotten -- or perhaps they never knew -- the basis upon which democratic government is founded: that the opinion of all the people, freely formed and freely expressed, without fear or coercion, is wiser than the opinion of any one man or any small group of men.

We have more faith in the collective opinion of all Americans than in the individual opinion of any one American.

Your will is a part of the great will of America. Your voice is a part of the great voice of America. And when you and I stand in line tomorrow for our turn at the polls, we are voting equals.

In the past twenty years the number of those who exercise the right to vote in national elections has been almost doubled. There is every indication that the number of votes cast tomorrow will be by far the greatest in our history.

That is the proof -- if proof be needed -- of the vitality of our democracy.

But our obligation to our country does not end with the casting of our votes.

Every one of us has a continuing responsibility for the government which we choose.

Democracy is not just a word, to be shouted at political rallies and then put back into the dictionary after election day.

The service of democracy must be something much more than mere lip service.

It is a living thing -- a human thing -- compounded of brains and muscles and heart and soul. Democracy is every man and woman who loves freedom and serves the cause of freedom.

Last Saturday night, I said that freedom of speech is of no use to the man who has nothing to say -- that freedom of worship is of no use to the man who has lost his God. And tonight I should like to add that a free election is of no use to the man who is too indifferent to vote.

The American people and the cause of democracy owe a great deal to the very many people who have worked in an honorable way on each side in this campaign. I know that after tomorrow they will all continue to cooperate in the service of democracy, to think about it, to talk about it, and to work for it.

Tomorrow you will decide for yourselves how the legislative and executive branches of the government of your country are to be run during the next four years and by whom.

After the ballots are counted, the real rulers of this country will have had their say, as they have had it every two years or every four years during our whole national existence.

After the ballots are counted, the United States of America will still be united.

Discussion among us should and will continue, for we are free citizens of a free nation. But there can be no arguments about the essential fact that in our desire to remain at peace by defending our democracy, we are one nation and one people.

We people of America know that man cannot live by bread alone.

We know that we have a reservoir of religious strength which can withstand attacks from abroad and corruption from within.

We people of America will always cherish and preserve that strength. We will always cling to our religion, our devotion to God -- to the faith which gives us comfort and the strength to face evil.

On this election eve, we all have in our hearts and minds a prayer for the dignity and integrity and peace of our country.

Therefore, I believe that you will find it fitting that I read to you an old prayer which asks the guidance of God for our nation:

"Almighty God, who hast given us this good land for our heritage; We humbly beseech Thee that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of Thy favor and glad to do Thy will. Bless our land with honourable industry, sound learning, and pur^e manners. Save us from violence, discord, and confusion; from pride and arrogance, and from every evil way. Defend our liberties, and fashion into one united people the multitudes brought hither out of many kindreds and tongues. Endue with the spirit of wisdom those to whom in Thy Name we entrust the authority of government, that there may be justice and peace at home, and that, through obedience to Thy law, we may show forth Thy praise among the nations of the earth.

In the time of prosperity, fill our hearts
with thankfulness, and in the day of trouble,
suffer not our trust in Thee to fail; Amenⁿ.
