

**President Harry S. Truman's Speech
At the
Dedication of the Chapel of Four Chaplains
Temple University, Philadelphia, PA
February 3, 1951**

Dr. Poling, associate chaplains, and ladies and gentlemen:

This chapel commemorates something more than an act of bravery or courage. It commemorates a great act of faith in God.

The four chaplains whose memory this shrine was built to commemorate were not required to give their lives as they did. They gave their lives without being asked. When their ship was sinking, they handed out all the life preservers that were available and then took off their own and gave them away in order that four other men might be saved.

Those four chaplains actually carried out the moral code which we are all supposed to live by. They obeyed the divine commandment that men should love one another. They really lived up to the moral standard that declares: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

They were not afraid of death because they knew that the word of God is stronger than death. Their belief, their faith, in His word enabled them to conquer death.

This is an old faith in our country. It is shared by all our churches and all our denominations. These four men represented the Protestant, the Catholic, and the Jewish beliefs. Each of these beliefs teaches that obedience to God and love for one's fellow man are the greatest and strongest things in the world.

We must never forget that this country was founded by men who came to these shores to worship God as they pleased. Catholics, Jews, and Protestants, all came here for this great purpose.

They did not come here to do as they pleased—but to worship God as they pleased, and that is a most important distinction.

The unity of our country comes from this fact. The unity of our country is a unity under God. It is a unity in freedom, for the service of God is perfect freedom.

If we remember our faith in God, if we live by it as our forefathers did, we need have no fear for the future.

Today, many people have become full of fear. If we reaffirm our common faith we can overcome these fears.

This does not mean that we can always be sure what the future will bring. We cannot always know what the outcome of events will be. President Lincoln once said, "The Almighty has His own purposes."

But we need not be afraid of the outcome if we go on trying to do the right thing as God gives us to see the right.

That is what we are trying to do in the world today. We are trying to establish world peace, so that all men can live together in brotherhood and in freedom. And to do that, we are working with other nations to create the rule of law in the world.

And what does this rule of law mean? Let me give you an example. In the early days of our western frontier, law and order were not yet established. Disputes were settled in favor of the man who was quickest on the draw. Outlaws terrorized whole communities.

Men who wanted to see law and order prevail had to combine against the outlaws. They had to arm themselves. At times they had to fight. And after they had put down lawless violence, the courts took over and justice was established. And then it was possible for all citizens to get on with the important work of building up their own communities, paving the streets and building schools, and giving all the people a chance at the right kind of life.

That is just what we are trying to do today in the international field. If we can put a stop to international aggression, order can be established, and the people of the world can go ahead full speed with the constructive tasks of peace.

We are not trying to do this job by ourselves. We could not do it by ourselves if we tried. We are acting as one member of a whole community of nations dedicated to the concept of the rule of law in the world. As in all other communities, the members of this community of nations have many different ideas and interests and do not all speak with one voice. Some are cautious and some are impatient.

We cannot always have our own way in this community. But we have a tremendous responsibility to lead and not to hang back.

Fate has made this country a leader in the world. We shirked our responsibility in the 1920's. We cannot shirk it now. We must assume that responsibility now, and it will take everything we have—all the brains and all the resources that we can mobilize.

Leadership carries with it heavy responsibilities. Good leaders do not threaten to quit if things go wrong. They expect cooperation, of course, and they expect everyone to do his share, but they do not stop to measure sacrifices with a teaspoon while the fight is on.

We cannot lead the forces of freedom from behind.

The job we face is a hard one. Perhaps it will be harder in the few years immediately ahead than it will be in the years thereafter. If we can get over the present crisis successfully—if we can restrain aggression before it bursts into another world war, then things will be easier in the future. And I think we can do this. We can't be sure, of course, but there is good reason to hope for success.

In recent months the United Nations has been faced with a serious challenge. But it is meeting that challenge courageously, and it is still man's best hope of establishing the rule of law in the world.

General Eisenhower has brought home the report that the people of Europe, in spite of their difficulties and their many problems, want to preserve their freedom. He has told us of the effort they are making. They are working very hard, and if we all work together, we can be successful.

When things look difficult, there are always a lot of people who want to quit. We had people like that in the Revolutionary War, and we have had them in every war and every crisis of our history. Thomas Paine called them summer soldiers and sunshine patriots. If we had listened to them, we would never have been a free and independent nation. We would never have had a strong and prosperous country. We would not be strong enough now to stand up against Communist aggression and tyranny.

The sacrifices that are being made today by the men and women of this country are not being made in vain. Our men are in Korea because we are trying to prevent a worldwide war. The men who have died in Korea have died to save us from the terrible slaughter and destruction which another world war would surely bring.

Their sacrifices are being made in the spirit of the four chaplains in whose memory this chapel is dedicated. They are being made in defense of the great religious faiths which make this chapel a place of worship. These sacrifices are being made for the greatest things in this life, and for the things beyond this life.

I have faith that the great principles for which our men are fighting will prevail.