

PRAYER

Rev. Stefan M. Jonasson

Annual Wreath-Laying Ceremony at the Jón Sigurðsson Statue

Sunday, June 17, 2007

Infinite Spirit of Life, who blesses all lands with unique gifts and resplendent wonders: once again we have gathered to honour the vision and virtue of Jón Sigurðsson and express our affection for that country whose independence he laboured to restore, along with our love for this country in which we gather. In recalling the story of our forebears, we strive to stand not in the shadow of a statue but rather to stand upon the shoulders of the man and the people it commemorates.

No great achievement in history has ever really been accomplished by one person acting alone. Politicians are joined by poets and prophets, citizens and sages, who band together in overcoming common obstacles and pursuing common goals. We praise all those who have helped to shape our two nations, bending them towards goodness and justice. We give thanks for their legacy and we pledge ourselves to be faithful stewards of our common inheritance, conveying it to the future while adding our own portion to it.

In this, the bicentennial of the poet Jónas Hallgrímsson's birth, inspire in us an appreciation for the astonishing beauty of the earth, while reminding us that the earth itself is a divine gift—sentiments the poet expressed in his "Toast to Iceland":

*Our land of lakes forever fair
Below blue mountain summits,
Of swans, of salmon leaping where
The silver water plummets,
Of glaciers swelling broad and bare
Above earth's fiery sinews –
The Lord pour out his largess there
As long as earth continues!*

Our Canada too is a land of "lakes forever fair" and "blue mountain summits," rich wheat fields and clear flowing streams. Both lands are home to educated and industrious people, free institutions and cherished traditions. Help us to remember that these blessings come to us as a gift from your providence, for which our gratitude is overshadowed only by our humility before life's wonders.

Our common ancestors were rich in spirit but quite poor in things. Through industry and ingenuity, our cousins across the sea have built a modern and prosperous nation, while we here have enjoyed the fruits of this abundant land where our forebears came to dwell. Amidst our prosperity, inspire us with compassion for others, so that we may serve the needs of those not so blessed with a generosity to match our abundance.

And now let us depart this place inspired by the vision of those who have come before us, to ever build upon the foundations they have laid, "to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly" in your presence. Infinite Spirit of Life, this we ask in the name of all those known and unknown, present and absent, remembered and forgotten. This is we ask in the name of all the heroes and helpers of humankind.

Amen