

John Adams (1735-1826)

Special Message

given on December 19, 1799

UNITED STATES, *December 19, 1799.*

Gentlemen of the Senate and Gentlemen of the House of Representatives:

The letter herewith transmitted will inform you that it has pleased Divine Providence to remove from this life our excellent fellow-citizen, George Washington, by the purity of his character and a long series of services to his country rendered illustrious through the world. It remains for an affectionate and grateful people, in whose hearts he can never die, to pay suitable honors to his memory.

JOHN ADAMS.

MOUNT VERNON, *December 15, 1799.*

The PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

10 SIR: It is with inexpressible grief that I have to announce to you the death of the great and good General Washington. He died last evening between 10 and 11 o'clock, after a short illness of about twenty hours. His disorder was an inflammatory sore throat, which proceeded from a cold of which he made but little complaint on Friday. On Saturday morning about 3 o'clock he became ill. Dr. Craik attended him in the morning, and Dr. Dick, of Alexandria, and Dr. Brown, of Port Tobacco, were soon after called in. Every medical assistance was offered, but without the desired
15 effect. His last scene corresponded with the whole tenor of his life; not a groan nor a complaint escaped him in extreme distress. With perfect resignation and in full possession of his reason, he closed his well-spent life.

I have the honor to be, with the highest respect, sir, your most obedient and very humble servant,

TOBIAS LEAR.

The Senate, having resolved to wait on the President of the United States "to condole with him on the distressing event
20 of the death of General George Washington," proceeded to the house of the President, when the President of the Senate, in their name, presented the address which had previously been agreed to, as follows:

The PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES:

The Senate of the United States respectfully take leave, sir, to to you their deep regret for the loss their country sustains in the death of General George Washington.

25 This event, so distressing to all our fellow-citizens, must be peculiarly heavy to you, who have long been associated with him in deeds of patriotism. Permit us, sir, to mingle our tears with yours. On this occasion it is manly to weep. To lose such a man at such a crisis is no common calamity to the world. Our country mourns her father. The Almighty Disposer of Human Events has taken from us our greatest benefactor and ornament. It becomes us to submit with reverence to Him who maketh darkness His pavilion.

30 With patriotic pride we review the life of our Washington and compare him with those of other countries who have been preeminent in fame. Ancient and modern names are diminished before him. Greatness and guilt have too often been allied, but his fame is whiter than it is brilliant. The destroyers of nations stood abashed at the majesty of his virtue. It reprov'd the intemperance of their ambition and darkened the splendor of victory. The scene is closed, and we are no longer anxious lest misfortune should sully his glory. He has traveled on to the end of his journey and
35 carried with him an increasing weight of honor. He has deposited it safely, where misfortune can not tarnish it, where malice can not blast it. Favored of Heaven, he departed without exhibiting the weakness of humanity. Magnanimous in death, the darkness of the grave could not obscure his brightness.

Such was the man whom we deplore. Thanks to God, his glory is consummated. Washington yet lives on earth in his spotless example; his spirit is in Heaven.

40 Let his countrymen consecrate the memory of the heroic general, the patriotic statesman, and the virtuous sage. Let

them teach their children never to forget that the fruit of his labors and his example are their inheritance.

SAMUEL LIVERMORE,

President of the Senate pro tempore.

DECEMBER 23, 1799.

45 To which the President replied as follows:

UNITED STATES , *December 23, 1799.*

Gentlemen of the Senate:

I receive with the most respectful and affectionate sentiments in this impressive address the obliging expressions of your regard for the loss our country has sustained in the death of her most esteemed, beloved, and admired citizen.

50 In the multitude of my thoughts and recollections on this melancholy event you will permit me only to say that I have seen him in the days of adversity, in some of the scenes of his deepest distress and most trying perplexities; I have also attended him in his highest elevation and most prosperous felicity, with uniform admiration of his wisdom, moderation, and constancy.

Among all our original associates in that memorable league of the continent in 1774, which first expressed the
55 sovereign will of a free nation in America, he was the only one remaining in the General Government. Although with a constitution more enfeebled than his at an age when he thought it necessary to prepare for retirement, I feel myself alone bereaved of my last brother; yet I derive a strong consolation from the unanimous disposition which appears in all ages and classes to mingle their sorrows with mine on this common calamity to the world.

The life of our Washington can not suffer by comparison with those of other countries who have been most celebrated
60 and exalted by fame. The attributes and decorations of royalty could have only served to eclipse the majesty of those virtues which made him, from being a modest citizen, a more resplendent luminary.

Misfortune, had he lived, could hereafter have sullied his glory only with those superficial minds who, believing that characters and actions are marked by success alone, rarely deserve to enjoy it. Malice could never blast his honor, and envy made him a singular exception to her universal rule. For himself, he had lived enough to life and to glory. For his
65 fellow-citizens, if their prayers could have been answered, he would have been immortal. For me, his departure is at a most unfortunate moment. Trusting, however, in the wise and righteous dominion of Providence over the passions of men and the results of their councils and actions, as well as over their lives, nothing remains for me but humble resignation.

His example is now complete, and it will teach wisdom and virtue to magistrates, citizens, and men, not only in the
70 present age, but in future generations as long as our history shall be read. If a Trajan found a Pliny, a Marcus Aurelius can never want biographers, eulogists, or historians.

JOHN ADAMS.

The House of Representatives having resolved unanimously to wait on the President of the United States "in
condolence of this national calamity," the Speaker, attended by the House, withdrew to the house of the President,
75 when the Speaker addressed the President as follows:

SIR: The House of Representatives, penetrated with a sense of the irreparable loss sustained by the nation in the death of that great and good man, the illustrious and beloved Washington, wait on you, sir, to express their condolence on this melancholy and distressing event.

To which the President replied as follows:

80 UNITED STATES *December 19, 1799.*

Gentlemen of the House of Representatives:

I receive with great respect and affection the condolence of the House of Representatives on the melancholy and

affecting event in the death of the most illustrious and beloved personage which this country ever produced. I sympathize with you, with the nation, and with good men through the world in this irreparable loss sustained by us all.

85 JOHN ADAMS.
(1269 words)

Quelle: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=65683>