

**Remarks by H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
At Thanksgiving and Intercessory Worship Service
In Observance of the 165th Independence Anniversary
Of the Republic of Liberia
Bethel Cathedral of Hope
Sunday, July 22, 2012**

Fellow Citizens:

As we celebrate our nation's 165th Independence Day celebration; as we celebrate our ninth year of post-conflict peace; indeed, it's time to thank God.

Every person, particularly officials of government, whether by legislation, for their prosperity, for their promotion, should be here to join in praising God for His blessings.

It's also time to pray, as climate change disrupts productive systems, leading to high commodity prices and food insecurity, we need to pray for God's grace.

As the turmoil in places like Syria, and north Mali, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia, we need to pray for God's grace.

Closer to home, disturbances around our borders, we need to pray for God's grace.

As there's an attempt to roll back the progress of democracy, so well won over many years of struggle, we need to pray for God's grace.

When our young students, pursuing knowledge, pursuing an education, resort to violence as a means of expressing their democratic right, we do need to pray for God's grace.

When a twelve-year-old has a child, being defiled – and there are so many other young girls facing that – let’s pray for God’s grace.

I want to thank all of you for coming out. I thank our Orator, Dr. Elwood Dunn, who will be speaking to us.

I want to thank you, Bethel Church, Pastor Belleh, for always welcoming us. And thank the Christian community for what they have done in holding the nation up in prayers.

Today, we go forward; each of us, as Pastor Karpeh has called, for more intensive efforts at reconciliation.

We cannot legislate love. We cannot legislate good relationships. It has to come from each and everyone’s own heart. We have to feel it to believe in it.

And so the only thing is to pray for God’s grace, that He will touch each and every one of our hearts as you try to live by His call and reconcile our nation.

I asked the Vice President, what do you do when the Church gives you a collection? He said that we’ve never faced that before. So he said, well, you know, they say it is a “Prophetic Seed.” Therefore, he said we should take it, and buy some seed rice, and send the seed rice to all of the counties, and ask each of them to plant it somewhere.

Mr. Vice President, I will carry it one step further: They must plant it in a secure place, so we can see which county will really grow their seeds and not eat the seeds.

Let me thank all of you for joining us, as we praise God, as we thank Him, and as we continue to pray for our nation’s peace, reconciliation and love.

May God bless us all.