



## Quote of the Day



## High Court Ruling Favors Prayer at Council Meeting

By Mark Sherman, Associated Press, 5-5-14

WASHINGTON (AP) -- A narrowly divided Supreme Court upheld decidedly Christian prayers at the start of local council meetings on Monday, declaring them in line with long national traditions though the country has grown more religiously diverse. The content of the prayers is not significant as long as they do not denigrate non-Christians or try to win converts, the court said in a 5-4 decision backed by its conservative majority. Though the decision split the court along ideological lines, the Obama administration backed the winning side, the town of Greece, N.Y., outside of Rochester....



Article: [www.WTOP.com/319/3616345/High-court-ruling-favors-prayer-at-council-meeting](http://www.WTOP.com/319/3616345/High-court-ruling-favors-prayer-at-council-meeting).

## Beaumont Enterprise 5-16-14 ... Death Sentence for ... WHAT?

Really ... have you seen this? This is the year of our Lord 2014 and *this* is “reported” in the back of the paper under a “world news” section of *summaries*. And our U.S. Secretary of State was a woman, Hilary Clinton, and no few other powerful women around the world.

Question: What is our response to this as a nation? As a Christian community? As a member of a local church here in East Texas?

**DEATH SENTENCE A**  
pregnant Sudanese woman who refused to renounce her Christianity was sentenced to death Thursday in a Khartoum court. Meriam Yehya Ibrahim, who has a young son and is married to a Christian from South Sudan, violated Islamic sharia law, the court said. She insists she was raised Christian. The court also ordered her flogged for for having sexual relations with her husband, since her marriage is not recognized.

## What Do You Think? – on Private vs. Public Prayer

Cal Thomas, Beaumont Enterprise, 5-15-14, 6A

# Prayer is powerful, but it should be private too

Ever since the Supreme Court ruled organized prayer and Bible study in public schools unconstitutional in the early 1960s, conservative Christians have been trying to re-enter the secular arena.

Take *Lemon vs. Kurtzman* (1971). The case, *The New York Times* wrote last year, "... challenged a 1968 Pennsylvania law that reimbursed religious schools for some expenses, including



Cal Thomas  
TCeditors@tribune.com

teachers' salaries and textbooks, so long as they related to instruction on secular subjects also taught in the public schools. Chief Justice Warren E. Burger ... said the law violated the First Amendment's prohibition of government establishment of religion. The ruling set out what came to be known as the *Lemon* test, which requires courts to consider whether the challenged government practice has a secular purpose, whether its primary effect is to advance or inhibit religion, and whether it fosters excessive government entanglement with religion."

Last week's 5-4 ruling by the Court upholding prayer at government meetings might have stretched the *Lemon* test.

Writing for the majority, Justice Anthony Kennedy said the prayers

offered at a town council meeting in Greece, New York, are ceremonial and in keeping with the nation's traditions.

"If prayer is largely 'ceremonial' then it has lost all meaning. One might as well chant '2-4-6-8 who do we appreciate!'"

Since 1999, the Greece town council has opened a majority of their meetings with Christian prayers. Two people recently complained about the sectarian nature of the prayers and filed a lawsuit.

In response, the town council began inviting members of other faiths to pray. These included a Jewish layman, a Wiccan priestess and the chairman of the local Baha'i congregation. Each faith has a different, even competing concept of God, which dilutes, at least for Christians, the purpose of praying before council meetings.

This case reinforces what the Founders had in mind when they wrote the First Amendment. Having experienced the negative effects on religion from a state church in England, they sought to prevent government from meddling in religion in America. They struck a brilliant balance in the establishment and free exercise

clauses. Government would not establish a state church and believers (and nonbelievers) could freely exercise their personal faith (or lack thereof).

### Inherent problem

When the state defines what constitutes legitimate religion, the free exercise of faith suffers and the government violates the establishment clause by defining legitimate religious practice. Just ask Hobby Lobby President Steve Green, who challenged the Affordable Care Act's stipulation that he offer emergency contraceptives as part of his employees' health benefits, abortion being contrary to his religious beliefs.

The Greece town council, apparently more interested in seeking approval from the state than from God, was willing to water down its prayers in order to maintain a "tradition" and win court approval. Why not just pray "to whom it may concern?"

Justices tried to draw distinctions between the prayers said before opening sessions of Congress (OK because Congress gets to make its own rules and members are free to join in, or not), and a

Christian prayer uttered at a public high school graduation (ruled unconstitutional in 1992).

There is nothing to prevent and much to recommend elected officials praying in private before a meeting. If the intent is to seek God and His direction, that is the proper way to do it, according to no less an authority than Jesus of Nazareth, who said: "But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." (Matthew 6:6)

Jesus also rebuked the Pharisees when He said in verse 5 of the same chapter: "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full."

While public prayers might be constitutionally acceptable, according to the 5-4 majority, there is a Higher Power that takes a dimmer view of them.

God save (and put some common sense into) this honorable court and town councils everywhere. Maybe we should pray, privately, toward that end.

### PAUSE TO PRAY

Lord, We resolve today to stop complaining about what we don't have. Help us as we seek ways to multiply, not our possessions, but our value to mankind.

### Your opinion counts

Letters to the editor must have writer's address and phone number and be addressed to:

Opinions@BeaumontEnterprise.com or  
Opinions, The Beaumont Enterprise  
P.O. Box 3071  
Beaumont, Texas 77704

Letter guidelines can be viewed online at  
[BeaumontEnterprise.com/opinions](http://BeaumontEnterprise.com/opinions)

Complete silence on this will lead – my opinion – to a complete silencing, though he *does* make some good points on the quality of the devotion that is "silent" and the cheapness of prayers in the public square. What is your opinion? – truly, email it to me and I'll sum for the next meeting: [Maness3@att.net](mailto:Maness3@att.net).

See all prior CLC Reports at [www.PreciousHeart.net/CLC](http://www.PreciousHeart.net/CLC)