

Jefferson's 1801 Inaugural Address



ABOUT THE READING Thomas Jefferson was the first president to be inaugurated in Washington, D.C. He gave his inaugural address on March 4, 1801, in the Senate Chamber. It was the only part of the Capitol that was completed. The following excerpt is from that speech. Jefferson had opposed the Federalists for years. In this speech he spoke about uniting the members of different parties.

VOCABULARY

countenance approve of

deem think

persuasion belief

diffusion spread

sages wise people

creed guiding principle



As you read note the principles that Jefferson emphasizes.

Let us, then, fellow-citizens, unite with one heart and one mind. Let us restore to social intercourse that harmony and affection without which liberty and even life itself are but dreary things. And let us reflect that, having banished from our land that religious intolerance under which mankind so long bled and suffered, we have yet gained little if we **countenance** a political intolerance as despotic, as wicked, and capable of as bitter and bloody persecutions. . . Every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle. We have called by different names brethren of the same principle.

We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists. If there be any among us who would wish to dissolve this Union or to change its republican form, let them stand undisturbed as monuments of the safety with which error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it. I know, indeed, that some honest men fear that a republican government can not be strong, that this government is not

Let us try to get along with one another and speak kindly to each other. We must accept differences in politics as well as in religion.

Don't worry about people who criticize the government. They are reminders that differences of opinion can be tolerated when reason prevails.

Source: *The Avalon Project at Yale Law School*: <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/presiden/inaug/jefinau1.htm>

strong enough . . . I believe this, on the contrary, the strongest government on Earth. I believe it the only one where every man, at the call of the law, would fly to the standard of the law, and would meet invasions of the public order as his own personal concern. . . .

Our government is strong because people defend the rule of law.

You should understand what I **deem** the essential principles of our government. . .

Equal and exact justice to all men, of whatever state or **persuasion**, religious or political; peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none; the support of the state governments in all their rights, . . . a well-disciplined militia, our best reliance in peace and for the first moments of war till regulars may relieve them; . . . economy in the public expense, that labor may be lightly burdened; the honest payment of our debts and sacred preservation of the public faith; encouragement of agriculture, and of commerce as its handmaid; the **diffusion** of information . . . ; freedom of religion; freedom of the press, and freedom of person under the protection of the *habeas corpus*, and trial by juries impartially selected.

These principles form the bright constellation which has gone before us and guided our steps through an age of revolution and reformation. The wisdom of our **sages** and blood of our heroes have been devoted to their attainment. They should be the **creed** of our political faith.

These ideals have been the country's guiding stars.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. Why does Jefferson urge people to tolerate those who want to change the government?

2. How does Jefferson describe his approach to foreign policy?

3. How does Jefferson believe the government should treat its citizens?
