

Invocation Handbook



**The Rotary Club of
North Colorado Springs**



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Rotary International President D.K. Lee selected the theme for his 2008-2009 term to be:

Make Dreams Real

"In 2008-09, I will ask you all to Make Dreams Real for the world's children. This will be our theme, and my challenge to all of you."



Introduction and Acknowledgments

2003

The North Colorado Springs Rotary Club prepared this Invocation Handbook, drawing from many sources, including other Rotary clubs. We hope that our friends in all organizations and walks of life will find it useful for adding a spiritual note to group occasions. We invite readers to offer their own favorite invocations for possible inclusion in the next edition.

Jack Thomas
Ray Hess
Dave Margrave
Max Calkins
Rex Schultz

2009

This book has been updated and posted online in an effort to encourage a broader range of members to provide the Invocation at meetings.

The opinions and editorial choices expressed in this Invocation Handbook are those of individual members of the North Colorado Springs Rotary Club. They do not constitute policies or opinions of Rotary International, except as expressly stated in the chapter on Rotary International Policy.



Invocation Traditions

We are wise to take a moment from time to time, to revisit core principles. Invocations serve this purpose. In ceremonies and group assemblies, the invocation is often a prayer, such as the grace at the occasion of a meal or banquet.

“Invocation” is “the act of invoking or addressing in prayer or calling for the assistance of presence of any being, particularly of some divinity; a prayer said at the opening of a ceremony or service; the summoning of a spirit . . . or a calling upon a legal or moral standard or right.” *The Living Webster*, published by The English Language Institute of America, 1977.

Invocations draw us together to recommit to fundamental values, such as the simple acknowledgment of a divine authority, a statement of gratitude, or the yearning for common goals. We often invoke the guidance of the Deity to remind us by whose grace we received the gift of life and how to use that gift.

An invocation may simply be a moment of silence. Shared silence gives each person a chance to invoke his or her own moral or spiritual authority. It honors the sanctuary of the individual conscience as the wellspring of moral conduct.

Rotarians dedicate their talents and resources to the well being of their fellow humans. The principles of Rotary call upon each member to appreciate (and share) the gifts we might otherwise take for granted.

Meals present excellent opportunities to make invocations. Marcia and Jack Kelly stated this eloquently:

Saying grace is an ancient and vital tradition the world over.

To begin with, it provides a space, a moment of stillness, in which to relinquish the activities of the day and allow the mind to settle. Then, as we acknowledge the source of our nourishment, we are filled with astonishment at the generosity of the Creator, with gratitude, and with praise.

In bringing the body, mind, and heart together, we come to know ourselves, and remember who we are and why we are here. For some families, a meal is the only time everyone is present, and so the opportunity to enjoy one another and really celebrate the occasion is not to be lost. For many, a meal is also the only time that there is any memory of the Divine.

Saying grace establishes an immediate connection with that memory. In such a moment, when our minds are clear and the truth is reinforced by being sounded aloud, we can dedicate the meal and the strength we receive from it to the service of whomever or whatever is before us.

(*One Hundred Graces*, published by Harmony Books, a division of the Crown Publishing Group. 1992.



We respect all sincere religious traditions. This does not mean we purge all references to God from our public lives. Just as we honor individuals by respecting their diversity, we can respect the traditions that produced those diverse individuals.

In addition to many non-devotional and non-denominational invocations, this Handbook includes examples drawn from particular religious traditions. They should be used carefully, to avoid any appearance of promoting one's own religion.

Absolute neutrality may be impossible. Every name for the Deity — even those we consider perfectly generic — resonate more strongly with one tradition or another. The word, “God,” tends to exclude traditions in which the Deity is deemed plural. References to “Him” or to the “Father” often arise in the Judeo-Christian tradition, not those in which the Deity is considered feminine or gender-neutral. One may associate the word “Allah” with Islam, but the Arabic word “Allah” is also a generic word equivalent to “God” in English. It is used by some Christians and Jews in Arabic-speaking nations. Americans often assume no one could be offended by such matters. In the Middle East, people fight and die over them.

I believe we need to pay close attention to whether an invocation, *as heard by the listener*, rings of subtle pressure or propaganda. The listener hears not just the literal statement, but also the context of the invocation. The context includes the tone, the setting, and the religious background of the listener, as well as that of the speaker, and the source of the phrase or quoted text.

When we use prayers from our own religions, we should take extra care to be inclusive. We can borrow from the religious traditions of others with less risk. Quoting the scripture of another religion implies appreciation, rather than pressure to conform.

A thoughtful invocation speaks to the universal values which sustain us despite our differences in language and background. We can focus upon those common values, rather than differences in how we express them. Those values serve the goals and purposes of Rotary.

The thoughtful article, *Promoting Understanding Among Peoples of All Faiths: Guidelines for Public Prayer* (<http://www.cres.org/ref/ref0009.htm>) was of great help in preparing this Handbook.

– David J. Margrave, NCSRC, June, 2003



Rotary International Policy

The following policy statement is taken from *The ABC's of Rotary*:

Invocations at Club Meetings:

In many Rotary Clubs, particularly in Judeo-Christian nations, it is customary to open weekly meetings with an appropriate invocation or blessing. Usually such invocations are offered without reference to specific religious denominations or faiths.

Rotary policy recognizes that throughout the world, Rotarians represent many religious beliefs, ideas and creeds. The religious beliefs of each member are fully respected, and nothing in Rotary is intended to prevent each individual from being faithful to such convictions.

At international assemblies and conventions, it is traditional for a silent invocation to be given. In respect for all religious beliefs and in the spirit of tolerance for a wide variety of personal faiths, all persons are invited to seek divine guidance and peace "each in his own way." It is an inspiring experience to join with thousands of Rotarians in an international "silent prayer" or act of personal devotion. Usually, all Rotary International board and committee meetings begin with a few moments of silent meditation. In this period of silence, Rotary demonstrates respect for the beliefs of all members, who represent the religions of the world.

Since each Rotary Club is autonomous, the practice of presenting a prayer or invocation at Club meetings is left entirely to the traditions and customs of the individual Club, with the understanding that these meeting rituals always be conducted in a manner which will respect the religious convictions and faiths of all members.



General Recommendations

Suggestions for Preparing an Invocation

- Use your own style, in a manner consistent with your convictions.
- Express hopes and aspirations common to all.
- Make a statement of gratitude.
- Acknowledge the activity or occasion, such as the meal, the opportunity to meet with friends, or to serve the goal of the group.
- Model respect for all traditions, to invoke the largest spiritual context.
- Petition the Deity only for things that every person in the group would endorse without hesitation.
- It may be appropriate to request the speedy recovery of an ill member, or the success of the group or a sponsored or affiliated group.
- Never advocate special political or religious beliefs.
- Close with "Amen," or "Peace," "Thank you," "Namaste," or a similar phrase, to create closure to the invocation.

Most occasions call for a short invocation. Some situations may allow for an inspirational reading or poem, provided that it is reverent. This Handbook contains many brief quotations which one might choose to incorporate into an invocation. For example, one might quote an inspirational thought, and express the way in which it fits the goals of Rotary, or the assembled group.

Terms of Address

The Infinite can be named many ways, in different situations. References to the Deity should generally be as broad as possible, and inclusive of all major traditions. Some examples include:

God
Creator of All Things
Divine Spirit
Eternal Presence
Infinite Spirit
Spirit of Love

Almighty Creator
Divine Creator
Lord
Heavenly Father
Source of All Creation



Invocations for Any Occasion

A Moment of Silence

Let us take a moment of silence in order to: *[select one or more of the following or add any appropriate additional statement of purpose:]*

- Appreciate the gift of this meal and the fellowship of good friends in Rotary.
- Allow everyone to take inspiration from their own personal traditions of conscience.
- Pray to the Creator in whatever manner is consistent with our own creeds and convictions.
- Summon to mind those principles from which we find guidance.
- Acknowledge in our hearts the love we have been given, and seek the strength to share that love with others.
- Refresh our spirits by invoking the Divine, however we may conceive of It within the sanctity of our own minds.
- Draw inspiration from the Source of all creation, each in his or her own way.
- Meditate in peace and fellowship before going about the business portion of this meeting.
- Seek guidance from Providence, and express gratitude for the bounty of meal and opportunity to serve mankind through Rotary.
- Reconnect in faith with the Source of Life, and take joy in the opportunity to be with good friends with a common purpose.
- Give thanks for the fellowship of good friends, and the opportunity to hear from [our speaker today] after enjoying this meal.
- Allow all of us, in the sanctuary of our own hearts and minds, to reconnect with the guiding principles which inspire our lives.

Themes of Service

Only a life lived for others is worth living.

(Albert Einstein)

Everyone can be great because everyone can serve.

(Martin Luther King, Jr.)

Give like the rose gives its perfume -- effortlessly, unconditionally because it is its own nature.

(Vivekananda)

The only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve.

(Albert Schweitzer)



The fruit of silence is prayer.
The fruit of prayer is faith.
The fruit of faith is love.
The fruit of love is service.
The fruit of service is peace.
(Mother Theresa)

I slept and dreamt that life was joy;
I awoke and saw that life was service;
I acted and behold, service was joy!
(Rabindranath Tagore)

Lord,
Make me an instrument of Your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.
Where there is injury, pardon.
Where there is doubt, faith.
Where there is despair, hope.
Where there is darkness, light.
Where there is sadness, joy.
Grant that I may not so much seek to *be consoled*, as *to console*;
To *be understood*, as to *understand*; and
To *be loved*, as *to love*.
For it is in *pardoning* that we are pardoned.
And it is in dying to the self that we are born to eternal life. Amen.
(Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi)

Heavenly Father,
Teach us that even if we can't do great things, we can at least do small things in a great way. May we always be sincere in our efforts to help others in need. Now bless this food to our use and us to Your service.
Amen. (*Invocations for Kiwanis Occasions, Kiwanis International, Indianapolis, IN 2001.*)

Meals

Father in heaven,
Sustain our bodies with this food, our hearts with true friendship; and fellowship and our souls with Your truth.
Amen.

For the food that nourishes our bodies . . .
for the fellowship here that feeds our souls . . .
for all things good and beautiful with which our lives are filled . . .
we render thanks to You -- giver of every good and perfect gift. Amen.



Lord, bless our meal,
and as You satisfy the needs of each of us, make us mindful of the needs of others.
Amen.

(Mt. St. Mary's Abbey, MA)

Accept, O Father,
our humble thanks for this our daily food, and as it adds strength to our bodies, may it
give us the power to render better service to Thee. Amen.

May God bless our meal and grant us a compassionate and understanding heart toward
one another. Amen.

(Mt. St. Mary's Abbey, MA)

For food to nourish
the body and conversation to enrich the mind, may the Lord make us truly thankful.
Amen.

Blessed are you,
Lord, God of Creation.

You feed the whole world with Your goodness, Your grace, Your kindness and Your
mercy. You nourish and sustain us and do good to all. Bless this food to our use and us
to Your service. Amen.

(Dr. William Dougherty, Rotary Club of Elmira Heights)

Rotary

Bless, O Lord,
this food to our use, and us in Your service. Keep in our hearts and minds the message
of "service above self" and bless our gathering together. Amen.

Lord,
Refresh us with this food. and nourish our hearts and minds with the constant values
that make us Rotarians. Open before us the way of peace and service. Amen.

Let's take a few moments to bow our heads in gratitude. We give thanks for the
companionship of our colleagues in Rotary, for the strength we draw from this meal, and
for the opportunity to put these to the service of our brothers and sisters around the
world. Amen.

(David Margrave, NCSRC)

May light and love surround us and guide us to right action.
May love, joy and peace be Yours in abundance.
May our Club be made holy, O God, by Your Light.



Divine and Eternal Presence,

We thank You once again for this fine meal, and for our good friends in Rotary. Keep us ever mindful that we are related, as individuals and as nations, and that the struggles of our brothers and sisters across the globe belong to us all. Inspire us, as we renew our commitment to service above self. Thanks be to You.

(David Margrave, NCSRC)

O God, our Father,

Who gives food for the body, and truth for the mind -- so nourish and enlighten us that we may grow wise to do Your will, and ever mindful of the ideas and values of Rotary. Amen.

Heavenly Father,

we thank You for this food and for all Your goodness to us. Give us grace to do Your will and serve above self.

For family and friends . . .

for health and strength . . .

for love and joy, we thank You

and pray that we may so use these gifts as to increase the happiness of all those around us. Amen.

We come to this hour knowing that it is but an hour. Yet out of all the hours in the week this is one that is set apart: an hour that is saved, an hour that is savored. It is a time for to recognize what gives life meaning. It is a time to honor what we value. It is a time to celebrate our lives. Let us then celebrate, honor, and recognize that we might fully savor this hour we have saved.

(Louise Robeck)

O God, our Father,

Who gives us food for the body and truth for the mind so enlighten and nourish us that we may grow wise and strong and do Thy will. Help us to continue in our efforts as Rotarians.

We ask these blessings in Thy holy name. Amen.

Almighty God,

Bless this food which we are about to receive

Bless us this during this time that we share

and we may be ever mindful of Thy will and our duty towards our goal of Service above Self. Amen.

May those assembled here today enjoy the many offerings of Rotary. May we abide by the rules we have established, those of trust, fellowship and ethics, and may we place service above self, in our daily endeavors. And may we always test ourselves and our efforts to be sure they are the truth, good for all concerned, of benefit to mankind, and provide peace and understanding. Amen.



It is good to recognize how different we are in our talents, our dreams, our backgrounds, our occupations. In our differences we can move together toward a common goal. Bless us as we meet together. Thank You for our individuality and also for our common bond. Amen.

(Phil Morris, Rotary Club of Furnitureland, High Point, NC)

Today we pray

that we may receive Your special blessing because we are committed to be a real service organization to help humankind. May each of us in our daily routine come to know the joy of caring and sharing with others not as fortunate as we are. May our motto that includes serving, caring and sharing be for us life service as well as lip service.

For friends,

food, fun and fellowship, especially the fellowship of Rotary we give our sincere thanks. May these tokens of Your bounty nourish our physical bodies in preparation for the challenges that are ours in Rotary. Keep us always mindful of the needs of others and keep us always attuned to our calling in Rotary. We ask these things in the name of Your eternal truth. Amen.

(Rev. Kenneth D. Benner, Rotary Club of Strathcona Sunrise Comox Valley, BC, Canada)

Bless, O Lord,

this food to our use, and us to Thy service in Rotary. We look to Thee, O Lord, for food to nourish our bodies; for grace to strengthen our spirits; for love to enrich our lives; and for the will to serve as Rotarians. Amen.

Creator of All things,

We thank You for the opportunity to enjoy this excellent meal; to be with good friends; to learn from this fine speaker; and to serve mankind through this fine organization.

Lord of the Universe,

We use that name for you to remind us that no matter their denomination, all good people are guided by your spirit. We remember, Creator, that our own Rotary International was chartered early in the 20th century, shortly before the war called, "The Great War to End All Wars" began. Sadly, it was not to end all wars after all . . . there have been too many wars since that time.

But now we look ahead. We stay focused on the objectives we have for the world: Peace and Understanding. A true brotherhood of man. Freedom from hunger, from oppression, from sickness. The freedom to choose our own destinies. We reaffirm our commitment to our simple Rotary "Four Way Test" for all we do and support: Is it the truth? Is it fair to all concerned? Will it build good will and better friendships? Will it be beneficial to all concerned? In a time when being non-judgmental is "politically correct", we will be judgmental, evaluating our actions and those of others by this simple extension of the Golden Rule.



We reaffirm our commitment to high ethics in all we do. And we give thanks for all the blessings, opportunities and responsibilities that befall us as Rotarians, North Americans, and individuals. We continue with optimism, renewed energy and a commitment to service to you and our fellow man. Please, Lord of the Universe, help us to serve. Amen.

Those in Need

Heavenly Father:

Let us pray for the sick, the lonely, and the hungry, and let us make someone's day happier by doing an unexpected kindness. May we always willingly share our blessings with those in need. Amen.

We pray to God to eradicate all the misery in the world:
that understanding triumph over ignorance,
that generosity triumph over indifference,
that trust triumph over contempt, and
that truth triumph over falsehood.
(Zoroastrian prayer)

Peace and Blessings

Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity.
Be fair in judgment, and guarded in thy speech,
Be a lamp unto those who walk in darkness, and a home to the stranger.
Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring.
Be a breath of life to the body of humankind, a dew to the soil of the human heart, and a fruit upon the tree of humility.
(Bah'ai Prayer for Peace)

May the blessing of God rest upon you,
May His peace abide with you,
May His presence illuminate your heart,
Now and forevermore. Amen.
(Sufi blessing)

Grandfather Great Spirit

All over the world the faces of living ones are alike. With tenderness they have come up out of the ground. Look upon Your children that they may face the winds and walk the good road to the Day of Quiet. Grandfather Great Spirit, fill us with the Light. Give us the strength to understand and the eyes to see. Teach us to walk the soft Earth as relatives to all that live.

(Sioux Prayer, quoted in *Earth Prayers from Around the World*, edited By Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidon, Harper Collins Publishers, 1991.)



Mother, Father, Good, Universal Power

Remind us daily of the sanctity of all life. Touch our hearts with the glorious oneness of all creation as we strive to respect all the living beings on this planet. Penetrate our souls with the beauty of this earth as we attune ourselves to the rhythm and flow of the seasons. Awaken our minds with the knowledge to achieve a world in perfect harmony and grant us the wisdom to realize that we can have heaven on earth.

(Jo Poore, quoted in Earth Prayers from Around the World, edited By Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidon, Harper Collins Publishers, 1991.)

Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, that we may walk the paths of the Most High. And we shall beat our swords into ploughshares, and our spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation - neither shall they learn war any more. And none shall be afraid, for the mouth of the Lord of Hosts has spoken.

(Jewish prayer)

Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.

(Martin Luther King, Jr.)

Tolerance and Compassion

Let us take a moment to remember all the religions represented in the worldwide Rotary family. Let us recall that when we were invited to join this Rotary club, we were not asked if we were a Protestant, a Hindu, a Muslim, a Jew, a Catholic, or a Buddhist. We were not asked because all religions are welcome in the Rotary family. Please join me in a moment of reflection and thanks with these words: With our friends beside us, and no person beneath us. With the bonds of Rotary between us, and our worries behind us. With our goals before us, and no task beyond us. With a thirst for knowledge, and a dream for a polio-free world. We are thankful for our Rotary friends and the meal we are about to share. Thank you.

(Chris Offer, 5040 District Governor)

Holy God, let us be faithful witnesses to the power of your love. Let our lives mirror hope in the midst of despair, let our deeds be filled with compassion in a world of bruising indifference, let our words be truthful when misinformation holds center stage, let our forgiveness build new bridges of reconciliation. Let your Spirit fill us with courage and hope. Amen.

(Max and Bruce Calkins, NCSRC)

Oh Great Spirit of our Ancestors,

I raise my pipe to you.

To your messengers the four winds,

and to Mother Earth who provides

for your children.

Give us the wisdom to teach our children



to love, to respect, and to be kind
to each other so that they may grow
with peace of mind.

Let us learn to share all good things that
you provide for us on this Earth.

(Native American prayer quoted in Earth Prayers from Around the World, edited By Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidon, Harper Collins Publishers, 1991.)

Invocations for Special Occasions

Special Guests

Lord,

Thank You for the blessing of a visit from [d.g.] District Governor [name], and the experience and perspective she brings to us, for the guidance of our club, in the service of Rotary. Amen.

Veterans Day

Lord,

Thank You for the courage and dedication of all the men and women who have served their nation in uniform. Remind us that the freedom we so often take for granted today was purchased at enormous cost; that our own lives were ransomed by men and women who laid down their own lives, limbs, health, and fortunes, upon the altar of freedom; that many of these guardians still endure wounds to the soul which we cannot comprehend; and that we enjoy today the company of people who risked all, so that we and our loved ones might live in peace and safety. Help us to remember their service, and learn from their example. Amen.

(NCSRC)

Heavenly Father:

Teach us to use *our* freedom to help to preserve and strengthen the freedom of *all*;

By respecting and upholding its laws;

By supporting our law enforcement agencies;

By informing ourselves on current issues;

By voting regularly and wisely; and

By honoring the rights of other people;

And now bless this food to our use and us to Your service. Amen.

(Invocations for Kiwanis Occasions, Kiwanis International, Indianapolis, IN 2001.)

Lord,

as we enjoy our fellowship, help us to remember how fortunate we are to be able to serve our brothers and sisters around the world through Rotary and our amazing Foundation. That we are prosperous, help us to give of our material wealth. That we are free, enable us to work together on projects. That we are generous, help us to work



together to accomplish amazing successes. And that we are dedicated, bring us together as an individual club to continue our efforts to serve our community.

Guide us in our service. Keep us well so we can serve. And bless those peoples around the world touched by our works, so that they, too, can have the joy of a fulfilling life, full of good health and companionship, in surroundings that are beneficial to all. Amen.

(Joseph D. Coons, Bellingham WA)

Lord,

Help us to forever remember those guardians who stood in harm's way to protect our loved ones and us. Bless and keep those guardians of liberty and their loved ones, just as they blessed us and ours with their service in the name of freedom.

(NCSRC)

O God of time and eternity, help us look to the past with gratitude and to the future with hope. We remember this day those who have gone before us here, who labored not for themselves alone but with a vision of building for the future a world better than they had known. Inspire in us also a like vision, that we too may labor for things beyond ourselves, that our lives may be dedicated to high purposes and grand horizons. Make us unafraid of hopes and dreams; release us from cynicism and despair. Teach us to be realistic about our limitations but never to lose hope in our potential to transcend them. Amen.

(Earl Holt)



Contacting The Rotary Club of North Colorado Springs

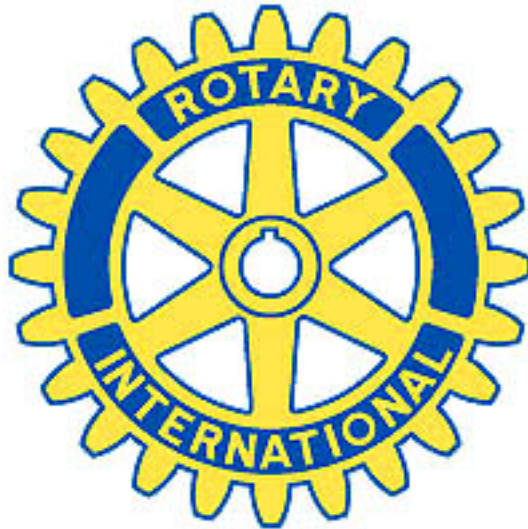
The Rotary Club of North Colorado Springs meets every Wednesday at 12:00 noon at the Embassy Suites, just West of the intersection of I-25 & Woodman Road.

If you are interested in learning more about Rotary, we invite you to visit our website at: <http://www.northcoloradospringsrotary.org> and call or email any member.

The Four - Way Test

. . . of the things we think, say or do:

1. Is it the **TRUTH**?
2. Is it **FAIR** to all concerned?
3. Will it build **GOODWILL** and **BETTER FRIENDSHIPS**?
4. Will it be **BENEFICIAL** to all concerned?



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