

is the people's house, and it belongs to Americans of all faiths.

The story of Hanukkah celebrates a great miracle. More than 2,000 years ago, the land of ancient Israel was conquered, its most sacred temple was desecrated, and Jews were forbidden to practice their faith. A patriot named Judah Maccabee and his followers took a stand for freedom and rose up against their oppressors to take back Jerusalem.

When the Maccabees returned to reclaim their holy temple, the oil that should have lasted only one day burned for 8. That miraculous light brought hope. And today, by lighting the menorah, Jews around the world celebrate the victory of light over darkness and give thanks for the presence of a just and loving God.

We're honored to have a beautiful menorah here from Lisa and Alan Stern of Los Angeles. The ceramic plaques around the base feature biblical scenes of the Hanukkah story. And between the menorah branches are painted doves, which represent the eternal wish for peace.

I want to thank Ariel Cohen and her family for being here. Ariel, you did a wonderful job of saying the Hanukkah blessings and lighting the candles. I also thank the Indiana University's Hillel HooShir Choir for your wonderful performance. We're really glad you came. Thanks for coming.

On Hanukkah, we're especially mindful of the sacrifices that freedom requires. Our Nation is grateful to the men and women of every faith who serve our country in uniform and who are away from their families this holiday. We pray for them and their families, and we pray that those who still live in the darkness of tyranny will someday see the light of freedom.

The word "Hanukkah" means dedication, and the message of Hanukkah calls on us to dedicate ourselves to recognizing the miracles in our daily lives. This dedication has the power to lift our souls and to make us better people and to make the world a better place.

Laura and I wish all the people of the Jewish faith around the world a Happy Hanukkah, and thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:36 p.m. in the Bookseller's Area at the White House.

Message Sending Holiday Greetings to Members of the Armed Forces

December 18, 2006

To the Men and Women of the United States Armed Forces

On behalf of all Americans, Laura and I send our best holiday wishes to you and your families.

During this hopeful time of year, the hearts of Americans are filled with gratitude for the many blessings in our lives. We are especially thankful for the priceless gift of freedom that our Armed Forces help defend by serving the cause of peace and standing watch over our security. As courageous Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen, you have set aside comfort and convenience to protect the rest of us, earning the respect of a grateful Nation and a proud Commander in Chief.

Many of you are confronting our adversaries abroad and observing the holidays in places far from home, but you are close to our hearts. You are serving at a time when our Nation needs you, and your fellow citizens appreciate the many sacrifices that you and your families are making every day. Over the holidays and throughout the New Year, we will continue to ask the Almighty to bestow His care on you and your loved ones.

Laura and I wish each of you a safe and joyous holiday season. May God bless and watch over you, and may God bless America.

George W. Bush

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Message on the Observance of Christmas 2006

December 18, 2006

"For unto us a child is born . . . and His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Isaiah 9:6