Oh, God, our Father…we who are thy children … your sons and daughters … gather on this quiet day in prayer to remember a leader who once had lived in solitary ages who later lived on world stages.

We bow our heads in reverence and respect to remember this man of grace, this man of forgiveness and this man of decency. We understand in our hearts that life has to end, but we also understand that love does not have to end.

In our hearts and minds we are saddened at the death and passing of Nelson Mandela. He was not only great in the sight of many who mourn, but he was also good. And from the sadness we feel at his passing, gratitude emerges as we consider the honor of having watched and learned from his approach to life. We feel thankful that we were here when he was and because of his life – and the way he lived it – we know that we must seize and grab opportunities now to forgive, to share, to explore and to love for there is no greater way we could honor his name and his life than to live like he tried to live.

As we gather in prayer our hearts are filled with goodly thoughts and strong feelings as we remember that all of us do not have to think alike, but it becomes increasingly important for each of us that we learn to love alike.

We are reminded in deep humility and grace -- over and over -- that when the hand of death reaches out to take from us, a friend, a family member, a leader or a teacher – as Nelson Mandela has been to millions – that a part of us is not going to die with him, but on the contrary a part of us will live with him … for he has only stepped into the other room.

And as has been chiseled and carved in stone for hundreds of years around the world, we know that on his tombstone that sits in our minds we must always strive to remember his vision. Yes, he is gone…but never forgotten … for there are many things worse than death. However, when it comes to someone we know, it always seems so final to our hearts.

Yet President Mandela would stand here himself, if he could, and remind us that what lies in the future … and beyond … is a matter of faith in what we have always hoped for. In faith we must act, to do good, for that is the Mandela way.

To this end our solemn prayer extends our love and praise to thee for blessing this man with courage, wisdom and honor. We shall not soon forget the life he lived.

May we all be blessed for being here and may we continue to reflect on Nelson Mandela and his purposes, taught by his God and accepted into his life to pursue. This hope in our soul and this prayer in our heart are ours today and always … amen.

Invocation offered by Jon B. Fish -- Interfaith Council of Greater Sacramento -- at California State University-Sacramento Pan-African Studies memorial/remembrance service for President Nelson Mandela, Thursday, December 12, 2013 – Student Union Building, Redwood Room, California State University, Sacramento, 5-8pm.