

America at 250: Blessings and Challenges

Session #1: One Nation Under God

A. Miracles of the American Revolution

The United States declared its independence from Great Britain in 1776. In that same year, an historian in Europe named Alexander Fraser Tyler wrote a book about ancient Greece titled *The Decline and Fall of the Athenian Empire*. From his study of the ancient city-state of Athens, the birthplace of democracy, Tyler discovered a pattern or cycle in the rise and fall of societies and nations. This cycle is as follows: from bondage to spiritual faith; from spiritual faith to great courage; from great courage to liberty; from liberty to abundance; from abundance to selfishness; from selfishness to complacency; from complacency to apathy; from apathy to dependence; and from dependency back again to bondage. Tyler found that the average length or time period for this pattern to unfold was 200 years.

Here in the United States, of course, we're about to celebrate our 250th anniversary—which means we have passed or exceeded the historical average of this cycle. However, that's not a reason for us as Americans to become proud or complacent, for the negative stages of the cycle Tyler identified can certainly be recognized in our country's history over the last fifty years or more. Abundance has led to selfishness on the part of many of our fellow citizens, followed by complacency, apathy, and dependence; millions of Americans are no longer motivated by noble, patriotic, or Christian ideals; quite a few lack any sense of personal responsibility or accountability, and are most likely incapable of making the great sacrifices so willingly undertaken by our ancestors. Fortunately, that is not yet the case for our nation as a whole; there are still many millions of committed Christians and fervent patriots fighting for the soul of our country: men, women, and young people determined to live by and proclaim their allegiance to God as the source of our liberty and prosperity. The United States has faced grave threats to its existence and freedom in the past, and overcome them—and with God's help, the same thing can yet again be true today.

Most Americans—especially those mis-educated or propagandized in the government school system—tend to take our nation's founding for granted. Yes, we know the patriots had to endure terrible hardships and make great personal sacrifices, and yes, we realize their victory over the most powerful empire in the world was truly astounding—but even so, few of our fellow citizens today realize how miraculous our victory in the Revolutionary War truly was. There are numerous instances of what secular historians would dismiss as fortunate circumstances or blind luck, and what religious believers would recognize as divine intervention—and any one of them could have turned the course of the war in an entirely different direction, preventing America from gaining her independence from Great Britain, and resulting in many of our now-revered founding fathers being hanged as traitors.

Several of these miracles directly involved George Washington himself. Washington was truly the “indispensable man,” without whom there was no chance of winning the war and gaining national independence. He is to be considered not just the greatest American, but one of the greatest men of all human history; what he achieved was unprecedented, and truly miraculous. In retrospect, it seems clear that Washington was chosen by God for an historic

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mission—and this first sign of divine favor occurred over twenty years before the Revolution itself. At the age of twenty-three, during the French and Indian War, Washington was a colonel in the colonial militia attached to the ill-fated British army under Major General Edward Braddock. In 1755 the British were advancing with the intention of capturing Fort Duquesne, near modern-day Pittsburgh, when they were ambushed by a force of French soldiers and Indian warriors. Braddock was killed, as was every other horse-mounted officer, except for Colonel Washington. He bravely rallied the survivors and led the defeated army back to safety and was praised for his courage during the disastrous defeat. As Washington himself later wrote in a letter to his brother, “by the All-Powerful Dispensations of Providence, I have been protected beyond all human probability or expectation; for I had four bullets through my coat, and two horses shot under me, yet escaped unhurt, although death was leveling my companions on every side of me.” A Native American who fought on the opposite side stated many years later, “Washington was never born to be killed by a bullet! I had seventeen fair fires at him with my rifle and after all [that] could not bring him to the ground.” A similar miracle would later occur during the Revolutionary War itself. Washington, as commander-in-chief of the Continental Army, happened to come within range of an expert British marksman, not knowing how close he was to danger. The British officer, Major Patrick Ferguson, could easily have killed him—but for some reason he couldn’t explain, he found himself unable to take the shot, and Washington rode off to safety and eventual victory.

When the Continental Congress had to choose a general for the newly-formed American forces, George Washington was the obvious choice. His first major campaign was an effort to drive the British out of Boston, using cannons transported 300 miles overland from Fort Ticonderoga in upstate New York. If he could fortify Dorchester Heights, overlooking the city, the British would be forced to evacuate. However, they recognized the danger, and planned an amphibious attack on the American positions before the cannons could be emplaced. Fortunately for Washington, an unexpected gale-like storm prevented this assault, so the Americans gained the upper hand and the British were forced to abandon Boston. As Washington wrote in another letter to his brother, “This remarkable Interposition of Providence is for some wise purpose, I have not a doubt.”

Following this morale-raising victory, Washington marched his army to New York City to defend it against a British attack, stationing his troops along the western edge of Long Island. However, the Americans were outnumbered four-to-one, and out-manuevered by the better-equipped and more-experienced British. As night fell, Washington’s forces had their backs to the East River, and the British were confident of destroying his army—and the revolution itself—the next morning. Washington ordered an emergency evacuation, even though the British navy endangered the attempt; fortunately, unfavorable weather kept their ships from patrolling the river. As the evacuation began, a heavy fog suddenly developed, hiding the Americans as they quietly rowed across the East River; as one patriot soldier later wrote, “Providentially for us, a great fog arose, which prevented the enemy from seeing our retreat.” As one historian noted years later, “If the wind, rain, and the fog—termed the ‘heavenly messenger’—had not intervened for the Americans, they would have been captured, Washington would have been hanged, and the Revolution would have come to an early end.”

Under General Washington, the Continental Army experienced more defeats than victories, but the British were never quite able to deal a decisive blow. At the end of 1776, with the enlistments of most of his troops about to expire, Washington decided upon a surprise attack on the Hessian outpost in Trenton, New Jersey. (The Hessians were mercenary soldiers from Germany paid to fight on the British side.) After crossing the ice-filled Delaware River, the Americans marched overnight through a snowstorm and attacked at sunrise the day after Christmas, completely routing the Hessians; this victory reinvigorated American morale and helped sustain the Revolution. However, it almost didn't happen. A loyalist spy—one sympathetic to the British—saw the Americans coming, and hurriedly wrote a warning, which made its way to the Hessian commander, Colonel Johann Rall, who was busy celebrating Christmas with his officers by a game of cards. Instead of reading it, he shoved the note into his pocket—a fatal omission causing the Hessians to be unready for the American attack.

Following this shocking victory, the British sent a powerful force under their best general, Lord Charles Cornwallis, to destroy the Americans, who were soon trapped against a small river on muddy ground during a January thaw. Overnight the temperature suddenly dropped, allowing Washington and his men to escape. Slipping behind Cornwallis, they attacked the British garrison at Princeton, achieving another badly-needed victory. Favorable weather also played a key role in the important 1777 American triumph at Saratoga in New York; a British army was forced to surrender, convincing France to enter the war on the colonists' side.

A few months later, however, Washington's army endured a terrible winter at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania; they were short on food and warm clothing, and it was perhaps the low point of the revolution. Washington was frequently seen kneeling in fervent prayer. His headquarters was a stone farmhouse which still exists today. One afternoon he left strict orders not to be disturbed, but shortly afterwards realized he had a visitor—whom he later called “a woman of singular beauty.” It's not clear whether this was the Virgin Mary or an angel, but the heavenly visitor said, “Son of the Republic, look and learn.” He saw three visions, the first of which showed a new nation spreading across the continent, indicating that America's war of independence would be successful. The second seemed to be a harbinger of the Civil War, and the third a foretelling of perhaps World War III, each marked by great bloodshed and destruction. Then Washington heard the visitor say, “Son of the Republic, what you have seen is thus interpreted: Three great perils will come upon the Republic. The most fearful for her is the third. But the whole world united shall not prevail against her.”

These encouraging words helped Washington and his men persevere against all odds for the next three years until the final victory at Yorktown, Virginia, in 1781. Lord Cornwallis' army won a number of victories in the south, but as he pursued the small American force under General Nathaniel Greene, his supply lines lengthened. The British advanced to Yorktown, on the Chesapeake Bay, hoping to be resupplied by the British navy—but a French fleet prevented this. Washington's army and his French allies closed in on the British, who tried to escape across the York River, but a severe rain squall made this impossible, and a few days later Lord Cornwallis was forced to surrender, in effect ending the Revolutionary War—a victory that truly turned the world upside down. As General Washington later noted, “the perseverance of the armies of the United States, through almost every possible suffering and discouragement for the space of eight long years, was little short of a standing miracle.”

B. Covenant and Blessing

Once a peace treaty was signed, the newly recognized nation of the United States of America was governed under an arrangement called the Articles of Confederation, but these proved to be too weak and inefficient, so a constitutional convention was held in Philadelphia in 1787. However, progress was very slow and contentious. States like Pennsylvania and Virginia wanted to hold onto their influence, smaller states were jealous and suspicious of their larger neighbors, arguments occurred regarding slavery, and differing regional outlooks and priorities seemed to make compromise impossible. Finally Benjamin Franklin addressed the delegates: “I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth: that God governs the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid?”—and then he urged that the daily deliberations begin with prayer. Once his proposal was adopted, a new outlook arose; compromises were suggested and accepted, and a Constitution—with the addition of a Bill of Rights—was finally hammered out, eventually ratified by the thirteen states, and enacted, with George Washington chosen as the country’s first president.

Washington, as the famous quote states, was “first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen.” His presidency established a number of precedents that still exist today (such as the title “Mr. President”), and, despite various difficulties, he successfully led and guided the young nation in its early years. Washington could easily have allowed himself to be made king, or president-for-life—but conscious of his duty before God and history—he refused to do so, and deliberately stepped down and returned to private life at the end of his second term. During the ancient Roman Republic, when Rome was seriously threatened by foreign enemies in the 5th century, B.C., a farmer named Cincinnatus, in order to save the city, was twice given absolute or dictatorial powers. Twice he was successful, and twice he relinquished his authority and returned to his farm. Over the centuries his example was often praised, but rarely imitated—so when George Washington voluntarily stepped down as president and returned to his Virginia estate of Mount Vernon, he was hailed as a “modern Cincinnatus.” (When King George III of England heard this news, he was astounded, and declared that Washington truly was the greatest man of the age.) Washington spent the last two years of his life supervising his estate, dying on December 14, 1799, at the age of 67.

Though many historians dispute it, there is a highly-plausible legend that our country’s first president died as a Catholic, even though he was raised an Anglican or Episcopalian. George Washington had many close Catholic friends and advisors; during the Revolution, he often rebuked his troops for profaning the Holy Name of Jesus, telling them if they didn’t stop they would surely lose the war; he adopted the Catholic custom of blessing himself before meals; he always kept a beautiful picture of Our Lady in his living room; he attended Mass in Philadelphia during the Constitutional Convention; and he was the largest contributor to the construction of St. Augustine Church in that city. On his deathbed, Washington sent for a Jesuit priest, his close friend Father Leonard Neale, who spent several hours alone with him in his sick room. When Neale’s Jesuit colleagues later asked the outcome of the visit, he simply responded, “Everything has been taken care of.” Washington’s slaves, who were raised as Baptists and who inherited that religion’s strong anti-Catholic prejudice, later said, “Master George had been seduced by the scarlet woman of Rome” (meaning the Catholic Church).

Regardless of Washington's actual religion at the time of his death, there's no doubt that he—like most of the founding fathers—was deeply conscious of America's reliance upon divine grace; for instance, fifty-two of the fifty-five delegates in 1787 to the Constitutional Convention were Christian. Washington himself stated, "It is impossible to rightly govern without God and the Bible." John Adams, our second president, said, "The general principles upon which our founders achieved independence . . . were the principles of Christianity," and "Religion and virtue are the only foundations of free government." Thomas Jefferson, our third president, prayed, "May that Infinite Power which rules the destinies of the universe lead our councils to do what is best . . . for peace and prosperity." According to our fourth president and primary author of the Constitution, James Madison, "A nation that will not be ruled by the Ten Commandments, shall be ruled by tyrants." Lastly, our fifth president, James Monroe, announced, "The liberty, prosperity, and happiness of our country will always be the object of my most fervent prayers to the Supreme Author of All Good."

America's establishment as a nation was virtually unique in history because the founding fathers deliberately imitated ancient Israel in establishing a sacred covenant with Almighty God. According to author Jonathan Cahn, in his popular book *The Harbinger*, this covenant came with a condition. If the people of Israel remained faithful to it, they would be singularly blessed by God, more than any other nation—but if they violated the covenant, their blessings would be removed, and, being held to a higher standard than other peoples and nations, they would be subject to various chastisements as a form of divine discipline. According to Mr. Cahn, what happened to ancient Israel was repeated, and is being repeated, in America today—beginning with the 9-11 terror attacks, which showed that our country's "hedge of protection" had been removed. Until September 11, 2001, America had been largely exempt from foreign-instituted violence in our homeland—but the airliners crashing into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon showed this was no longer the case.

George Washington was sworn in as our first president on April 30, 1789 in New York City, which was then serving as our national capital; after this ceremony, he and members of the Senate and House of Representatives went to a small stone church which still exists today. At St. Paul's Chapel our nation's leaders consecrated America's future into the hands of God and His holy protection—and it was there, 212 years later, that this protection was withdrawn, for St. Paul's Chapel is at the corner of Ground Zero, that is, where the Twin Towers fell on 9-11. The Chapel, by the way, was virtually untouched by the destruction of that day—a visible reminder of God's promise of either blessing or chastisement.

Mr. Cahn writes, "On the third day after the calamity, a construction worker was standing in the ruins of one of the shattered buildings. When he looked up, he saw . . . a cross, a perfectly formed cross, twenty feet high, of cast iron beams from the fallen towers standing in the midst of a landscape of devastation, as if rising up from the ruins. When he saw it, he couldn't hold back from weeping. In the days and weeks that followed, it would become known as *the Cross of Ground Zero*, a sign of faith and hope in the midst of calamity, a sign again calling a nation to return [to God]" (p. 231). That leads us to the question: Has America indeed turned back to God? Immediately after 9-11 churches were filled, and politicians and national leaders exclaimed "God bless America!" even more than usual—but this spiritual renewal was short-lived. Most things soon returned to normal; like ancient Israel, people were more

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concerned with making money than strengthening their relationship with the Lord, and just as the Israelites—influenced by the pagans around them—sacrificed infants to false gods, so America continued her love affair with abortion. Moreover, those young people not destroyed in the womb were targets of a corrupting culture, in which patriotism, religious influences, and parental authority were often overwhelmed by social media, perverse entertainment, the widespread misuse of sex and drugs, teenage rebellion, and various self-destructive behaviors representing a rebellion against the Church, the family, and traditional societal values. Also, the government—under certain presidential administrations—manifested an increasing hostility to freedom of religion, faith-based charities, and the pro-life movement. In addition, the COVID disruptions and restrictions of 2020, the mass marches and demonstrations, and the riots and various acts of violence—along with substantial charges of a stolen presidential election—served as evidence that the nation we grew up in was on a path of self-destruction.

Not all the news is bad; at least a small-scale religious revival is underway, with young people—especially young men—currently returning to church in fairly significant numbers. Also, patriotism is back in vogue—at least in many areas of the country—and concerned citizens are now better informed and motivated, and more likely to push back against efforts by the Deep State and cultural elite to undermine or restrict their constitutional freedoms. More and more Americans are sensing that something is seriously wrong with our society, and are waking up to the urgent need to “take back their country” (expressed in part by the political slogan “Make America Great Again”). These positive trends, however, may be a case of “too little, too late,” or a sign that the tensions between blue states and red states are becoming irreconcilable. Many would agree that we’ve reached a “tipping point,” in which America’s future is uncertain, and capable of going in either direction. Fortunately, there is always reason for hope—especially through the intercession of the patroness of our nation.

C. Our Lady and America

Long before North America was colonized and the United States became an independent nation, the Virgin Mary was showing a special, motherly interest and concern for our land. The earliest explorers of North America were sent by the Catholic king of Norway in the 14th century. They left behind a message carved in what is now known as the Kensington Stone, discovered by a Minnesota farmer in one of his fields in 1898. This message said, “We are eight Goths and twenty-two Norwegians on an exploration journey from Vinland through the west. We had a camp . . . one day’s journey north from this stone. We were out and fished one day. After we came home we found ten men red with blood and dead. Ave Maria—save us from evil!” This message was dated in the year 1362—meaning the first invocation in the Western Hemisphere of Our Lady’s protection occurred 130 years before the arrival of Christopher Columbus.

Everyone knows, of course, the names of Columbus’ three ships: the *Nina*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa Maria*. What isn’t commonly known is that the original name of Columbus’ flagship was the *Gallega*, but he changed it to honor Our Lady. (The full, official name of the ship was the *Santa Maria de la Immaculada Concepcion*—Holy Mary of the Immaculate Conception.) A devout Catholic, Columbus led the crews of all three ships in singing Marian

hymns each evening. Upon discovering an island, which he named San Salvador (in honor of the Savior), Columbus and his men went ashore and sang the *Salve Regina*; they also taught the natives there the *Ave Maria* (the Hail Mary) and other Catholic prayers. Columbus afterwards named the second island he discovered in Our Lady's honor, calling it La Concepcion.

It's also been pointed out that the names of Columbus' three ships spelled out a message announcing an important event that would happen thirty-nine years later. *Santa Maria* means "Holy Mary," *Pinta* means "paint," and *Nina* means "girl"—which, put together in a sentence, reads "Holy Mary paints girl." This refers to the miraculous event of 1531, when Mary "painted" an image of herself as a young Indian maiden on St. Juan Diego's tilma or cloak—a scientifically-inexplicable image of Our Lady of Guadalupe which still exists, unfaded, in all its beauty today, and which prompted the conversion of nine million Mexican Indians to Catholicism in just ten years.

In the 17th century the famous French explorer Fr. Jacques Marquette named the greatest river in North America the "River of the Immaculate Conception"—though its name was later changed to the Mississippi. (It was a few years after this that French explorers came ashore on our own parish property here in Ira Township, erecting a wooden cross in 1679.) The French and Spanish missionaries and explorers introduced Catholicism to many Native Americans, with one of their most famous converts being St. Kateri Tekakwitha, the Indian maiden later known as the "Lily of the Mohawks." There were many conversions to Catholicism throughout much of the New World. However, the One True Faith wasn't welcome in most of the English colonies. Catholic settlers established themselves in Maryland (which happened to be the first colony to allow freedom of religion); however, these Catholics were only able to name their new colony after Our Lady by claiming they were actually honoring the English queen Henrietta Maria.

As mentioned earlier, 250 years ago America won her independence from Great Britain, but later engaged in another war with the British Empire: the War of 1812. The final battle of this war occurred outside New Orleans in January 1815. General Andrew Jackson's men were heavily outnumbered by the invaders—some of the finest troops in the British army, confident and well-trained veterans who had just triumphed against Napoleon. While the poorly-equipped Americans soldiers and militia were preparing for battle, the women of the city gathered at the convent of the Ursuline Sisters in New Orleans and prayed before a statue of Our Lady of Prompt Succor (a name meaning "Quick Help"). The next morning Mass was offered, and the sisters solemnly promised to have an annual Mass of thanksgiving said each year if the invaders were defeated. That day the Americans won a decisive victory, while suffering very few casualties; afterwards, General Jackson—who would become our seventh president—publicly acknowledged that the battle was won by heavenly intervention. Every year on January 8—the anniversary of the battle—a Mass of thanksgiving is offered by the Archbishop of New Orleans in fulfillment of the Ursuline Sisters' vow.

In 1846, on the Fourth Sunday of Easter, the Catholic bishops of the United States gathered together in Baltimore at the Cathedral of the Assumption of Our Lady and celebrated Mass to begin the Sixth Provincial Council. Baltimore was at that time the ecclesiastical see, or

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headquarters, for the Church in America, and was thus able to issue decrees for the entire country. The bishops formally named the Blessed Virgin Mary as patroness of the United States; this occurred on May 13—a date which would later become famous or significant when Our Lady appeared for the first time at Fatima in 1917. After the Seventh Provincial Council, held three years later in 1849, the American bishops informed the Holy Father, Pope Pius IX, that Catholics in the United States had a great devotion to the Immaculate Conception, and would be pleased if this belief that Our Lady was conceived without original sin would be declared an article of faith. As it happened, five years later, on December 8, 1854, Pius IX formally declared as sacred dogma the teaching that through an extraordinary Divine dispensation, Mary was completely untouched by sin when conceived in the womb of her mother, St. Ann.

Our Lady has always had a special place in the hearts of American Catholics, and there are over fifty-six dioceses in our country claiming Mary as their patroness. Over the centuries the Virgin Mary has allegedly appeared at many locations throughout the world, including several here in the United States, such as the towns of Champion, Wisconsin and Scottsdale, Arizona. Perhaps the most important of these apparitions occurred in the Fostoria, Ohio, under the title Our Lady of America (apparitions eventually accepted as authentic by the local bishop). Beginning in 1954, Mary gave numerous alleged messages to Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil, stating that she wanted the United States to be dedicated to her purity and thus serve as an inspiration to the world. Many years later, in November, 1980—a few weeks after Ronald Reagan was elected our 40th president—Our Lady said to Sister Mildred, “Dear child, unless the United States accepts and carries out faithfully the mandate given to it by Heaven to lead the world in peace, there will come upon it and all nations a great havoc of war and incredible suffering. If, however, the United States is faithful to this mandate from Heaven and yet fails in the pursuit of peace because the rest of the world will not accept or cooperate, then the United States will not be burdened with the punishment about to fall.”

Under President Reagan, America was indeed a force for peace and justice, and was blessed accordingly with great prosperity and security; our economy and worldwide influence reached new heights. Unfortunately, this has not remained the case in the decades that followed. A strong, moral America is a major obstacle to the evil one and his servants seeking to impose a New World Order, and so subverting our society’s moral foundations has been one of the devil’s highest priorities. Many wise and learned commentators have described how we as a nation have turned away from God and are increasingly rebelling against His commandments, especially through the sins of abortion, homosexuality, and overall sexual immorality. This, presumably, is why Our Lady of America wanted our nation to be dedicated to her purity as the Mother of God. One of her requests, given through Sister Mildred, is that a large statue of her under the title “Our Lady of America, the Immaculate Virgin,” be carried in a solemn procession of our nation’s bishops and then be enthroned in a place of honor at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington D.C. In return, Our Lady promised, our homeland would be protected from evil, and would witness many miracles and conversions.

This procession and enthronement has not yet occurred, but this past June 11—the day before the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart—the bishops of the United States did consecrate

America to the Sacred Heart of Jesus as a preparation for the July 4 celebration of 250 years of national independence (with individual dioceses and parishes urged to participate by conducting their own consecration ceremonies, or by having their people pray a special Novena to the Sacred Heart of Jesus provided for the occasion). As Pope Leo XIV stated, “Let us pray together that each one of us might find consolation in a personal relationship with Jesus, and from His Heart, learn to have compassion on the world.”

Will this consecration have beneficial effects? There are some reasons for optimism. For instance, many Catholic dioceses saw record numbers of catechumens enter the Church at Easter 2026. The current presidential administration has made the protection of religious liberty a high priority, and on Sunday May 17 thousands of Christians and patriots came to the National Mall in Washington D.C. for a day of “rededication of our country as One Nation Under God,” singing, praying, and listening to a video message from President Trump. The tragic assassination last fall of conservative speaker and influencer Charlie Kirk prompted many thousands of young people to join Turning Point USA, the pro-religious and patriotic organization he founded. Recent sociological research suggests that attendance at religious services is up significantly for the first time in two decades, led by young men in particular, with more church members volunteering and fewer clergy considering leaving the ministry.

On the other hand, America is still much less religious than it used to be; while violent crime has declined significantly, many cities remain dangerous places, and society as a whole shows little sign of undergoing a widespread religious revival. Politically, our country is more divided than any time since the Civil War. Moreover, the threat of World War III—perhaps linked to an escalation of the fighting in the Middle East—remains a huge concern, along with continuing acts of terror in various places around the world. If poverty and famine—exacerbated by the war-related closing of the Strait of Hormuz—continue escalating, worldwide economic distress will likely only increase the threat of war . . . and it would be foolish to assume the United States will somehow be exempt from these tragedies.

A struggle is underway for the soul of our country, and it’s vital that you and I, along with millions of other American believers, step forward and play our part in fighting this battle. Prayers, sacrifices, and acts of penance are more important than ever. The Lord promises us in Scripture, “If My people, upon whom My Name has been pronounced, humble themselves and pray, and seek My presence and turn from their evil ways, I will hear them from Heaven and pardon their sins and revive their land” (2 Chr. 7:14). The founding of the United States witnessed many miracles and instances of divine intervention, and the same thing can be true once again—but only if enough of us do our part in helping America once more become one nation under God.

America at 250: Blessings and Challenges

Session #1: One Nation Under God

A. Miracles of the American Revolution

In 1776 historian Alexander Fraser Tyler identified a cycle in the rise and fall of nations: from bondage to spiritual faith; from spiritual faith to great courage; from great courage to liberty; from liberty to abundance; from abundance to selfishness; from selfishness to complacency; from complacency to apathy; from apathy to dependency; and from dependency back again to bondage. The average length of time for this pattern to unfold was about 200 years. Parts of this cycle can be seen in American history. Many Americans are no longer motivated by the ideals of our nation's founding, but millions do acknowledge God as the source of liberty and prosperity. The United States has overcome grave threats to its liberty and existence before, and with God's help, can do so again.

Most Americans take our country's founding for granted, and are unaware of the many instances of divine favor and assistance helping us win independence from Great Britain—most notably in the life of George Washington, the “indispensable man” in the Revolutionary War. In 1755, during the French and Indian War, he miraculously survived a disastrous British and colonial defeat; one Indian warrior fired his rifle at him seventeen times, but never hit him. During the Revolutionary War, a British marksman also had Washington in his sights, but found himself, for reasons he couldn't explain, unable to pull the trigger. Unexpected storms, and other sudden changes of weather, frequently aided Washington and his men, including a victory in Boston; their miraculous escape—through a fortuitous fog at night—from certain destruction outside New York by the British the next day; the Americans' surprise attack on the British Hessian allies on Christmas day (in which the German commander pocketed a note of warning without reading it); and a sudden rain squall preventing the British from evacuating Yorktown, Virginia—resulting in a final victory guaranteeing American independence.

During the terrible winter of 1777-1778 at Valley Forge, Washington had a vision of a “woman of singular beauty,” who—addressing him as “Son of the Republic,” showed him three visions of America's future, including a new nation spreading across the continent. (The other two were of the Civil War, and an even more destructive future war.) The promise of victory encouraged Washington and his men to persevere, and he freely acknowledged the help the Americans received from Heaven.

B. Covenant and Blessing

At the suggestion of Benjamin Franklin, the delegates to the Constitutional Convention began each session with prayer, and this helped them finally overcome serious regional differences and suspicions and successfully create a Constitution. George Washington, America's first president, voluntarily stepped down after two terms, becoming a modern Cincinnatus (a hero of the Roman Republic); he spent his few remaining years at his estate of Mount Vernon, dying on December 14, 1799 at the age of 67. There is a highly-plausible legend that, with the help of a Jesuit priest friend, Father Leonard Neale, Washington was received into the Church on his deathbed and died as a Catholic.

Most of the founding fathers were Christian, and freely acknowledged God's authority and America's dependence on Him for continued liberty and prosperity. In *The Harbinger*, author Jonathan Cahn notes that the founders deliberately imitated ancient Israel by making a solemn covenant with God. Such a covenant results in divine blessings and protection not given to other nations—but if this covenant is broken, the consequences are severe. Because America began turning away from God, His protection was withdrawn—resulting in the 9-11 terror attacks. St. Paul's Chapel—located next to the Twin Towers, but largely untouched on 9-11—was the actual site where America was consecrated to God by our founders 212 years earlier.

Despite a temporary spiritual renewal in 2001, America as a whole has not repented and turned back to God—but even so, there are some positive trends in this regard. It remains to be seen whether or not our nation is truly capable of a widespread spiritual renewal; if so, this will likely occur through the intercession of the patroness of our nation.

C. Our Lady and America

The first known prayer for Our Lady's intercession is recorded on the Kensington Stone, and dates from 1362—130 years before the arrival of Christopher Columbus. The names of his three ships—*Santa Maria*, *Pinta*, and *Nina*—spells out “Holy Mary paints girl,” a reference to Our Lady's “portrait,” or miraculous image of herself, placed on St. Juan Diego's tilma or cloak at Guadalupe in 1531 (leading to the conversion of nine million Mexican Indians). The famous French explorer Father Jacques Marquette named the greatest river in North America the “River of the Immaculate Conception” (though this was later changed to the Mississippi). French and Spanish missionaries introduced Catholicism to many Native Americans (such as St. Kateri Tekakwitha), but—with the exception of Maryland—Catholics were largely unwelcome in the British colonies.

In the War of 1812, a British invasion of New Orleans was decisively defeated with the help of Our Lady's intercession. In 1846 the American Catholic Bishops formally named the Blessed Virgin Mary as the patroness of our country, and three years later requested that the Holy Father, Pope Pius IX, declare belief in the Immaculate Conception (Our Lady's preservation from original sin) a dogma of the faith (which he did in 1854).

Over fifty-six dioceses claim Mary as their patroness, and among her many apparitions throughout the world, several have occurred in the United States, such as at the towns of Champion, Wisconsin and Scottsdale, Arizona. The most important of these may be those granted to Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil in Fostoria, Ohio, beginning in 1954. Our Lady allegedly stated she wanted the United States to be dedicated to her purity, serving as an example for the world; she also requested that a large statue of “Our Lady of America, the Immaculate Virgin” be carried into the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington D.C. by a procession of American bishops, and there be enthroned in place of honor; this would result in many blessings for the United States.

This request has not yet been fulfilled, but on June 11, 2026, the U.S. Bishops did solemnly consecrate the United States to the Sacred Heart of Jesus (with similar ceremonies occurring simultaneously in many dioceses and parishes). As Pope Leo XIV (the first American Pope) stated, “Let us pray together that each one of us might find consolation in a personal relationship with Jesus, and from His Heart, learn to have compassion on the world.”

Will this consecration have beneficial effects? There are some reasons for optimism, for the current presidential administration has made the protection of religious liberty a high priority, and recent sociological research suggests attendance at religious services is increasing, especially by young men. However, America is much less religious than it used to be, and society as a whole shows little signs of a widespread religious revival. Politically, our country is more divided than at any time since the Civil War, and current fighting in the Middle East could potentially lead to worldwide economic collapse, or even World War III.

A struggle for our nation's soul is underway. God promises, “If My people, upon whom My Name has been pronounced, humble themselves and pray, and seek My presence and turn from their evil ways, I will hear them from Heaven and pardon their sins and revive their land” (2 Chr. 7:14). Each of us must help America once more become one nation under God.