

Dolorosa

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JULY 2019

A STEP BACK IN TIME

THE PATRIOT OF ISRAEL

Adapted from a sermon
given by Father Paul Krug, C.S.P.V.
July 4, 2019

Each year on July 4th, we celebrate the anniversary of the birth of our beloved nation. What many people do not know, however, is that the Declaration of Independence was not signed on Independence Day. The final draft was drawn up and approved by Congress on the night of July 4, 1776, but it was not signed until August 2. Today, then, is the 243rd anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

It was by means of this document that the American colonists declared themselves free from the tyrannical rule of England. While it is true that we celebrate this joyous event each Independence Day, we ought also to remember it on August 2nd. Moreover, as we recall this important moment in history, let us also honor the American patriots who worked so hard to make it happen and who fought so bravely to make America the great nation she became.

A patriot, according to one dictionary, is a person who vigorously supports his country and is prepared to defend her against her enemies or detractors. In other words, a patriot is one who backs his country by word and deed, as well as by prayer and sacrifice, and who is ready and willing to take a stand against his country's enemies.

Nations of all times have had patriots. Even the Israelite nation of the Old Testament had men and women who stood up for their people and country. One, in particular, stands out. For, were it not for this holy woman's heroic courage, as Father Justus Knecht points out in his *Practical Commentary on the Bible*, the entire Jewish nation would have ended in total destruction (315). Her name was Judith, and she lived about 690 years before the birth of Our Divine Savior.

At this time, the Israelites were in danger of being utterly destroyed by a pagan nation called the Assyrians. The Israelite city of Bethulia was threatened by the Assyrian general Holofernes and his army of about 132,000. Bethulia was the last line of defense before the Israelites' capital city of Jerusalem. Thus, if Bethulia fell to the Assyrians, Jerusalem and the holy Temple were destined to follow.

The Israelites were terrified at the prospect of war, but they nonetheless refused to surrender. Instead, they fervently besought Almighty God to spare them



— John Trumbull, Declaration of Independence, 1819.

and strengthen them for battle. They then armed themselves and prepared to defend the city.

Holofernes, however, had a different strategy in mind. He was not going to simply attack a well-fortified

city that was prepared to fight; he had a better plan. Before any attack would be made, he gave orders that Bethulia's water supply be cut off. Afterward, he ordered his army to camp around the city so that the Israelites could not escape.

After a few days, the Israelites realized what Holofernes was doing, and they began to panic. Soon, they even began considering a surrender, for they deemed it better to be taken into captivity by their enemy than to die of thirst. The leaders of Bethulia therefore decided that if help did not come in five days, they would give themselves over to the Assyrians.

Judith was one citizen of Bethulia. She was a young widow who was known for her holiness, virtue, and love of God, as well as for her great wealth and remarkable beauty. When she heard that the leaders were planning to surrender, she rebuked them. "Who are you to tempt the Lord?" she indignantly said. "This is not a word that may draw down mercy," Judith then explained, "but rather that may stir up wrath, and enkindle indignation. You have set a time for the mercy of the Lord, and you have appointed him a day, according to your pleasure" (Judith 8:11-13). In other words, Judith was saying, "Who do you think you are to set a time limit on the power and mercy of God?"

After reproving the leaders of the city for their lack of faith, Judith encouraged them to have faith in Almighty God. "[Have confidence]," she said, "[for our God] will humble all the nations that shall rise up against us, and bring them to disgrace" (Judith 8:20). She then told them that she would prove that God was with them. The Holy Ghost tells us in the Book of Judith: "And Judith said to them: As you know that what I have been able to say is of God: So that which I intend to do . . . pray that God may strengthen my design" (8:30-31). On hearing Judith speak so earnestly—even though they had no idea what she had in mind—the rulers of Bethulia placed their trust in this young widow.

Soon after meeting with the leaders, Judith returned to her home and prayed that God would strengthen her and assist her in her dangerous undertaking. Then, putting on her finest clothes and richest jewelry, she sneaked out of the city with one of her maidservants and headed towards the Assyrian camp.

Having arrived there, she asked to speak to the general and was immediately taken to the tent of Holofernes. When Holofernes saw her, he was stunned by her great beauty, and he readily listened to what she had to say. Judith explained to him that she and her maid

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had fled Bethulia so that they might escape the cruelty of the Assyrian soldiers when the city should fall. Her words moved Holofernes to compassion. He therefore commanded that a tent be given to her and her

maidservant, and he permitted Judith to come and go as she pleased.

A few nights later, Holofernes held a magnificent banquet for the officers in his army. In addition to his soldiers, he also invited Judith. At the feast, Holofernes drank so much wine that he fell into a deep sleep. Seeing this, Judith knew that the time to act had come. Thus, as soon as all the guests had left the feast, she knelt and began to pray for strength. Then, rising to her feet, she quietly picked up Holofernes' sword, and with two swings she cut off his head. Judith then quickly put the severed head into a bag and hurried back to Bethulia with her maid.

The Israelites welcomed her with great joy, and this joy quickly turned to exultation when Judith showed them the head of Holofernes. At first light the next morning, the Israelites, inspired with renewed courage, attacked the Assyrian army. The surprised Assyrians went immediately to inform Holofernes of the attack.

—Massimo Stanzione, *Judith with the Head of Holofernes*, 1640, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.





—Emanuel Leutze. *Washington Crossing the Delaware*. 1851. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.

Finding their general dead in his tent, they began fleeing in panic and fear.

Thus, it was through the hands of a woman that God saved His Chosen People from the wrath of the Assyrians. For the rest of her life, Judith was respected as the most valiant of all men and women in Israel. “Thou art the glory of Jerusalem,” it was said of her, “thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honor of our people” (Judith 15:10).

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When her nation was threatened by an enemy power bent on destroying her, Judith rose to her defense. Judith was, therefore, truly a patriot. She was, in a certain sense, to the Israelites what George Washington is to Americans. Were it not for Judith, the Israelites would have ceased to be; were it not for George Washington, as many historians hold, there would have been no United States of America. For, without George Washington, the War for Independence would have most likely been lost and the American Revolution would have failed.

“No other patriot,” writes Mark Edward Lender, “in or out of uniform matched the combination of attributes [Washington] brought to the Revolutionary cause, and no other patriot [could have] made so many critical decisions on behalf of the war effort.”

“Without Thomas Jefferson,” Lender concludes, “there still would have been a Declaration of Independence. . . . But without [George] Washington the Continental Army would not have survived as an effective force—and without the army the Revolution was doomed.” (Lender, Mark. “Would the Revolution Have Succeeded without George Washington?” *George Washington’s Mount Vernon*, 2016. www.MountVernon.org. 28 June 2019.)

The United States needs patriots like Judith and George Washington. Today, we face a far greater oppression than Judith and the Israelites or George Washington and our Founding Fathers ever faced, for the tyranny we face today is not that of another nation or another country; it is the tyranny of hell.

Satan and his agents in our government and our country are tirelessly working to utterly destroy the great nation that America once was—the nation that was founded, as George Washington said in his Farewell Address, on religion and morality. “Religion and morality,” Washington declared, “are the indispensable support for American prosperity.” In other words, without religion and morality as a foundation, America will not prosper but will crumble like a house built on sand.

This essential foundation of religion and morality is being attacked today. All hell has, as it were, been loosed against the United States. And, it would seem that Americans, for the most part, have looked the other way. Sadly, many cannot be bothered with the state of moral depravity in our country. Countless others have turned their backs on God. Even our government has turned



—William-Adolph Bouguereau. *Madonna and Child with Saint John the Baptist*. 1882. Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.

on God and has, so to speak, raised her fist to God's face by her immoral and unjust laws. As a result, American society has sunk lower and lower into the depths of degradation and is in grave danger as was Bethulia at the time of Judith.

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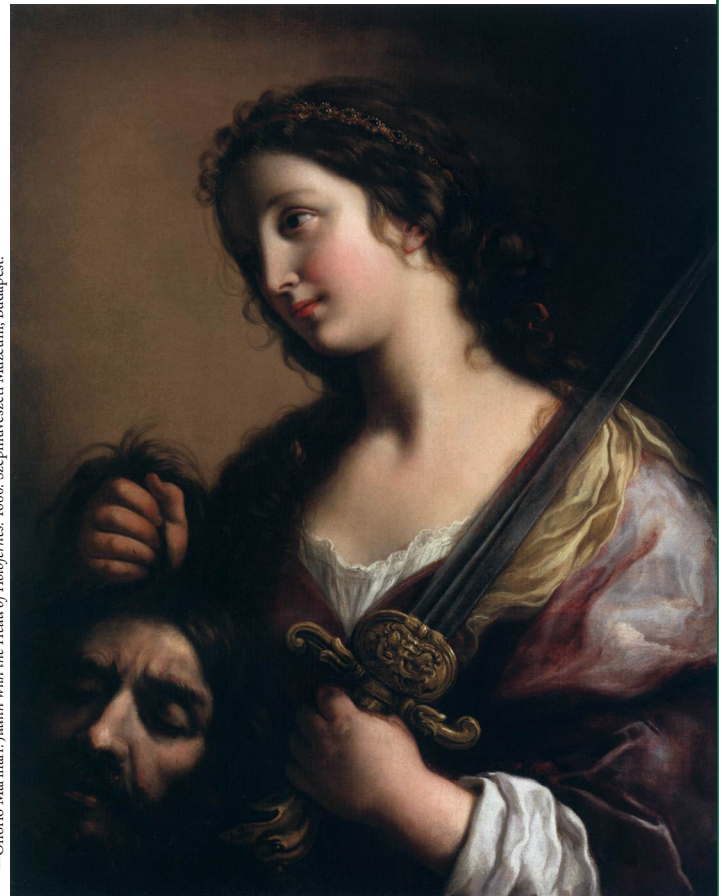
Despite this, we must be convinced, as the leaders of Bethulia were, that only through the hands of a woman will America return to the great nation she once was, that only through the hands of the most glorious and blessed of all women—the Blessed Virgin Mary—will the enemies of the United States be scattered and our country be saved.

Interestingly, nearly all Scripture scholars teach that Judith prefigures the Blessed Virgin Mary. This is so because just as Judith severed the head of Holofernes and saved her people, so too, has Our Lady crushed the head of Satan by bringing forth Our Divine Savior and she has thereby saved her people.

Like Judith, Our Lady surely has a plan that we do not know about. We must therefore trust her as the Israelites trusted Judith. We can be confident that the Blessed Virgin will guide us out of this situation because the United States of America is her country—it belongs to her. On May 13, 1846, twenty-two U.S. bishops gathered in Baltimore for a provincial council. There, they solemnly placed our country under the protection of Our Lady. Under the title of her Immaculate Conception, these bishops named the Blessed Virgin Mary as the Patroness of the United States.

Ireland has Saint Patrick for its special patron; Spain has Saint James the Apostle; England has Saint George; and Germany has Saint Boniface. The United States, however, does not have an apostle or a martyr; the United States has the very Mother of God. And, she is prepared to go to war with the powers of hell on our behalf if Americans will but go to her.

I believe that Our Lady has heard the prayers of Catholic Americans. In light of the recent anti-abortion laws that have been passed several states over the past few months, I am convinced that Our Lady has, in a certain sense, given a period of reprieve to our country. It would seem that pro-life politicians and lawmakers are finally beginning to take a stand against abortion. This is certainly proof that America can return to the God-fearing nation she once was. Even the results of the 2016 presidential election show that there are people who care



—Onorio Marinari. *Judith with the Head of Holofernes*. 1680. Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest.

for our country and who share the same American values that we do.

It is, therefore, no exaggeration to say that we are living at a rather pivotal time in the history of our country—a time which, like the days of the War for Independence, could very well shape the future of America. It may be a long road, but if we do our part and inspire others to do theirs, America can return to the solid Christian principles upon which she was founded.

Let us, then, be the patriots our country needs by practicing the virtue of patriotism to a heroic degree. The red, white, and blue on our American flag can guide us in this endeavor.

Red ~ Valor & Sacrifice

Red symbolizes valor and sacrifice. Let us fight for the United States, then, by our prayers and sacrifices. We can do this by offering up the little trials and difficulties we face each day for our nation and her citizens, for our president and our government. In 1917 at Fatima, Our Lady lamented that many souls will go to hell because there is no one to pray and sacrifice for them. Let us therefore do what we can for our country and our fellow Americans—let us snatch as many as we can from falling into the fires of hell.

White ~ Purity & Virtue

White signifies purity and virtue. Endeavor each day to be good Catholic Americans by striving to practice purity according to your state in life and by advancing in the practice of virtue each day, especially those of charity, patience, and meekness.



Blue ~ Devotion to Our Lady

Finally, the blue in the American flag is the special color of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Devotion to the Immaculate Patroness of our country is indispensable for Catholic Americans. It is essential not only for the wellbeing of America, but also for the salvation of our



souls. To practice this devotion, wear faithfully Our Lady's Brown Scapular, make the Five First Saturdays of Reparation to the Immaculate Heart if they are available at your chapel, and pray the Rosary every day as Our Lady pleaded with us to do at Fatima. Pray that Our Heavenly Mother will protect and guide the United States of America. Intercede for our president and our leaders that they will once again uphold Christian morality and belief in God. Beseech Almighty God to have mercy on our nation which so sadly deserves the severity of His punishment.

If ever there was a time which called for Catholic Americans to profess their Faith publicly, to defend it courageously, and to pray fervently for their country, that time is now. How desperate is the need today for true Catholic patriots who will fight against the tyranny of the devil and his agents with prayer, sacrifice, and devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

If ever there was a time, which called for Catholic Americans to profess their Faith publicly, to defend it courageously, and to pray fervently for their country, that time is now.

May Our Lady cover America with her mantle of maternal protection. Just as Judith cut off the head of Holofernes and secured victory for the Israelites, may Our Lady sever the head of Satan once and for all and drive him and his agents from our beloved nation. May she who is truly the glory of the United States, the joy of America, and the honor of our people, once again reign as Queen in the United States of America.