

- In 1849 Pope Pius IX went into exile in Gaeta, which is on the western coast of Italy between Rome and Naples. He was forced into exile by Italian Nationalists, whose insurgency took away the Papal States and led to the creation of modern-day Italy.
- The pope's companion, who was the Superior of the Fathers of the Most Precious Blood, suggested that the pope promise God to extend the Feast of the Precious Blood of Jesus to the entire Church if the Church were ever to recover possession of the Papal States.
- But after a few days of consideration, the pope decided that, rather than making a vow to God in exchange for an answer to prayer, he would just go ahead and institute the Feast of the Most Precious Blood for the universal Church.
- Thus, in 1849, what had been a local feast in Spain and Italy for a few centuries, then became part of the liturgical calendar for the entire Church throughout the world.
- Originally the Feast of the Precious Blood of Jesus was celebrated on the 1st Sunday of July each year, but that was eventually changed by Pope Pius X, who fixed the feast day on July 1st.
- Sadly, it was suppressed in the 1968 calendar reforms, meaning that this feast isn't celebrated in the *Novus Ordo* Mass, but only in the Traditional Latin Mass. Nevertheless, the month of July is still dedicated to the honor of the Precious Blood of Jesus in the Catholic Church.
- I bring up the Precious Blood of Jesus not simply because today is the 1st Sunday of July, but also because this weekend is the 250th anniversary of the founding of our country.
- Such a momentous occasion is a natural time for us to reflect upon our country as Americans. It's a time to give thanks for all the blessings we enjoy as Americans.
- It's a time to pray for our country. It's a time to look more closely both upon the qualities that have made America great, and those that are problematic or that diminish our greatness as a country.
- While America has so many tremendous qualities that have made us successful, there are also serious problems here. In particular, the moral and religious fabric that once made up the backbone of our country has largely been diminished by secularism.
- As our country has prospered, our religious fervor has waned. While there are many marvelous Christians in America, we've lost a lot of ground in recent decades. And as a country, we've enshrined many moral evils in our laws. This is where the Precious Blood of Jesus comes in!
- The Precious Blood of Jesus is a great weapon in the battle against evil, because our Lord's blood is the ransom He paid in order to redeem us!
- Christ's blood fell upon the earth in the Agony, it was shed profusely in the scourging, it flowed freely in the crowning of thorns, and it was poured out on the Cross, all that we might have forgiveness of our sins.
- When our Lord's Sacred Heart was pierced as He hung dead upon the Cross, His Precious Blood flowed out with water, inaugurating the Church's Sacramental system.
- Just as Adam's side was opened as he slept so that his bride might be formed from his rib, so was the side of the second Adam, Christ, opened as He slept in death so that His bride, the Church, might be re-formed and redeemed by the grace of the Sacraments.
- When we are baptized, when we make a good confession, when we receive Holy Communion worthily, we are washed clean by that same blood of Jesus. And by the grace of these sacraments we are made into living icons of Christ!
- So, in all these ways, the Precious Blood of Jesus counteracts the work of the devil. It undermines and conquers evil.

- Whereas the evil one uses lies, temptations, and insinuations in order to lead us into sin and away from God's grace, it's the blood of Jesus that forgives our sins and reconciles us with God.
- The Precious Blood snatches us from the clutches of the devil and protects us from his wiles.
- As we come to this momentous anniversary in the life of our country, I'm inviting you to pray the Litany of the Precious Blood for the preservation of America and its protection from the evil one. We must do this with great confidence.
- Our prayers, devotions, and sacramentals, especially those that mention the Precious Blood of Jesus, form an arsenal of weapons that every exorcist uses in his work of driving out the demonic. And for people of faith, there can be no doubt that there is a great battle between good and evil for the soul of our country.
- One of the devil's tactics is that, like any other bully, he makes himself appear more powerful and invincible than he really is. When we see him working as he is so freely and boldly in our society, we can be tempted to believe that he cannot be defeated.
- But if we turn to our Lord in humility through prayer and fasting, and if we make use of the Church's rich treasury of prayers, devotions, and sacramentals, we can participate in the Lord's work of banishing the power of the evil one from our midst.
- To this end, you'll find in the pews copies of the *Litany of the Precious Blood*. I ask that you each take one and pray it every day this month for our country. Do it as a family if you can. And do it as an act of patriotism. Let's talk about this virtue for just a moment.
- The rise of wokery and DEI initiatives in recent years has cast the virtue of patriotism in a bit of a negative light. The basic rhetoric coming from the left is that Americans should be ashamed of being American because of various sinful acts on the part of past leadership. It's ridiculous.
- While there are problems in our country, and while our leaders haven't always acted with good morals, that should not diminish our practice of the virtue of patriotism, which is a subset of the virtue of piety – and therefore a form of justice.
- St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that patriotism is giving honor to one's country. It's a form of justice because we owe our being, at least in part, to our country. Our country, and the culture it embodies, shapes us and forms us.
- Through its laws and institutions, our country educates and shapes us in much the same way as our parents do. So, just as we have natural duties of piety to God and our parents, we have an analogous duty of patriotism to our country.
- And just as one's duty to honor one's parents remains despite any of the parents' flaws and failings, the honor and respect owed to one's country isn't dependent on who's in charge or whether we agree with that administration's policies. The duty of patriotism is always there!
- As men and women of faith, as Christians, one of the very best things we can show our patriotism for our country is to pray for it.
- As we give thanks this weekend for 250 years of freedom in our country, let us commit to praying this litany daily so that our country may be protected from the power of the evil one, and that the devil might be vanquished from our society.
- Pray, too, that through the power of the Precious Blood of Jesus those who do not know Christ may come to know Him, and that those who have turned away from Him may return.
- May the Precious Blood of Jesus, by which we are reconciled to God, protect us from all things hurtful here on earth, and gladden us forever hereafter in Heaven.
- And may God bless America. Amen.