**My Homeland in Ordinary Times**

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By Lucia A. Silecchia

Three more years.

As we celebrate Independence Day this year, I can’t help thinking that we are now in the three-year run-up to our nation’s 250th anniversary in 2026. In some ways, three years seems like a long time away. Yet, if advancing years have taught me anything, it is that time passes far more quickly than I anticipate!

The celebration of our nation’s bicentennial in 1976 dominated some of my early childhood memories. Yet, so far, the celebration of our nation’s fast-approaching 250th birthday is not receiving much public attention. I hope that this changes soon.

Meanwhile, I have a modest proposal.

In the three years leading up to July 4, 2026, perhaps we can consider a three-year season of prayer for our nation as we recall the day when our predecessors, with “firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence” signed the Declaration of Independence.

Three more years.

Perhaps we can direct our prayers in each of the next three years to one of our three branches of government. This first year, as divisive national elections loom, we can pray for the executive branch, and for the wisdom and virtue of president, governors, and mayors as they discharge their obligations. Then, year two can be a season of prayer for our legislatures, praying for the wisdom and virtue of Congress, state legislatures, and city councils throughout the nation. Then, year three can be a time for prayer focused on the judicial branch and for the wisdom and virtue of courts and jurists across the nation. Indeed, in his 1791 *“Prayer for America,”* the nation’s first bishop, Baltimore’s John Carroll, proposed precisely that citizens pray explicitly for each branch of their government.

Three more years.

Perhaps, instead, we may order our prayers toward the three levels of government, rather than the three branches. This first year can be dedicated to prayer for all who serve and lead the nation on the federal level. Year two can be dedicated to those who serve and lead on the state level. Year three can be dedicated to all who labor on the local level. Indeed, while national leaders often garner the most attention, oft-overlooked local officials play a significant role in our day-to-day lives.

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Perhaps, instead, we can organize our prayers temporally – praying on our nation’s past this first year, its present in the second year, and its future in the third year. As we look to our past, there may be prayers of deep gratitude for all who came before us, for the nation they founded, and for the sacrifices they made to create and sustain a nation that has endured for a quarter of a millennium. In a particular way, the souls of all who died in service to the nation can be recalled. Included in that prayer, too, will be sorrow for past sins and errors -- and the prayer in *“America the Beautiful,”* that “God mend thy every flaw.” As we pray for our present there will, again, be gratitude for the abundant blessings we enjoy and prayers that we will have the courage, wisdom, optimism and virtue to tackle the pressing challenges of our day. Lastly, as we pray for our future, may our hearts be filled with hope that we will do all we can to leave the generations to come a “more perfect union” because of the choices and sacrifices we make today.

Three more years.

There is no shortage of prayers to be said for a nation in our challenging world. There are many ways to bring our nation before God in prayer as our landmark anniversary lies on the horizon. Three years of sustained prayer can give the next era of our history a sound start as we celebrate our 250th in three short years.

On October 7, 1979, as Pope Saint John Paul II was leaving the United States after his first papal visit to our shores, his parting words were:

“[M]y final prayer is this: that God will bless America, so that she may increasingly become—and truly be—and long remain—'One Nation, under God, indivisible. With liberty and justice for all.’ God bless America! God bless America!”

As we celebrate July 4th this year, and begin to anticipate our 2026 milestone, may his prayer be ours. May God bless my beloved homeland on her birthday, and in every day of ordinary time.

Happy Independence Day!

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