***Weekend Homily***

***12th Sunday Cycle A***

***June 25, 2017***

**As I sat down to write this weekend’s homily after spending time with the readings, what came to mind was a statement made by the bishops at the Second Vatican Council. In their document on the Liturgy the Bishops write that when the Scriptures are read at Mass, God is speaking to us his people, and Christ is continuing to proclaim his gospel.**

**That’s a pretty powerful statement when you think about it. What the bishops are saying--- regarding the gospel for example--- is that while it is the voice of the deacon or the priest we hear proclaiming it at Mass --- it is in fact Our Lord himself who is speaking to us.**

**That’s the way we need to listen to today’s gospel--as the Lord speaking to us gathered here for Mass this morning. His words are simple and direct. They are a warning about the power of evil and the evil one at work in our society today and in the broader world around us; a power that can threaten not only our present life but that life which is to come.**

**Jesus says to us: *“…do not be afraid of those who can kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna (in Hell).”* As I pondered this verse from the gospel I got to thinking of some of the horrific events of the past couple of weeks.**

**It was only a week and a half ago that there was an attempted assassination of 20 Republican Congressmen who on the morning of June 17 were practicing for a charity baseball game scheduled for the following evening. A gunman appeared on the field after asking if it was the Republican team practicing he opened fire, wounding four before he himself was shot by a couple of Capitol Police Officers who happened to be on the scene. Thank God those officers were there! Had it not been for those two police officers there would have been a terrible blood bath.**

**The reaction of Congress--- as well as that of the country as a whole--- was one of shock and disbelief. But you know it shouldn’t have been surprising to anyone given the hateful and venomous state of our politics. In spite of the incident the decision was made to go ahead with the game the following night.**

**The game began with the Democrat and Republican teams huddling together on the field and kneeling for a prayer. The ironic thing is that that kind of religious demonstration in public has been ruled unconstitutional by the courts. I give the congressmen credit for doing it anyway.**

**The Democrat team won the game that night. And in a grand gesture of outreach the Democrats gave the trophy to the Republican team to be put in the office of Steve Scalise, the Republican Majority Whip, who had been critically wounded in the assassination attempt. There was much talk that night about toning down the political rhetoric in this country and trying to work together for the good of the nation.**

**That good intention lasted less than 24 hours. The following morning some prominent politicians were on TV---their rhetoric was as inflammatory and hateful as ever—suggesting even that the Republicans had brought the attack on themselves by the policies they were pursuing. And so it continues.**

**This past week a Nebraska Democrat party official, referring to Steve Scalise who was critically wounded in the assassination attempt said “I’m glad he got shot. I wish he was “blanking” dead.” Then on Thursday actor Johnny Depp, attending an event in Glastonbury England asked to the crowd “When was the last time an actor assassinated a president---a reference to John Wilks Booth who killed Lincoln---then he added “It’s been a while—maybe it’s time.” And the crowd responded with applause.**

**His comment was only the latest in a series of comments coming out of the Hollywood and entertainment industry suggesting that maybe the assassination of President Trump might not be a bad thing; and always when they’re called on it their defense is always the same---“I was just joking.”**

**But here’s the thing--- it’s no joking matter. Threatening the life of a president is a crime. Maybe if the Hollywood elite and some in the media were prosecuted for their comments in this regard it might put an end to the sickness behind their remarks.**

**In our 241-year history as a nation we have faced many threats but not like the one we are facing now. In the past threats to our way of life have come came from the outside, from foreign enemies. But that’s not true this time. This time the threats are coming from within.**

**Make no mistake about it, there is a real struggle for the soul of our nation that is happening at the present time. In many ways it is a struggle between the forces of good and evil at work in our society. Which eventually wins out will be determined in large measure by the ballot box.**

**Here’s the thing we need to understand. In this struggle we have a critical role to play. It is our duty before God as a Church and as a people of faith to pray for our country and its leaders; to take to heart the words St. Paul addresses to us in the First Letter to Timothy where he writes: “My brothers and sisters, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be offered for all men especially kings and those in authority. Prayer of this kind is good, and God our savior is pleased with it.”**

**May God be pleased and grant a favorable hearing to our heart-felt prayers for this country we dearly love, and is in such danger and turmoil**