

**“By your perseverance you will secure your lives.” (Homily)**

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“By your perseverance you will secure your lives.”

We have just completed one of the most bruising seasons of our life as a nation. And it is not over, is it? The name-calling. The mud-slinging. The bruising. Tears. Demonstrations. Fire in the streets. Arrests. Incidents in schools. Arguments in families. In the words of today’s Gospel, so fitting for the times, “stone upon stone thrown down.”

I must warn you, a very old evil lurks here, and his name is Satan, and his weapon, his preferred method of destruction, is *distraction*. Thus, in today’s Gospel, the Lord’s counter-call *to persevere*, to disregard distractions, to get on with the business of life.

I, for one, have done my best in times like these to heed the Lord’s call by leaning heavily on the earthy advice of a beloved teacher. His name is Mr. John Antoniak, and he is now with God. Mr. Antoniak was a husband and father, a *solid* Roman Catholic, a *great* coach, and my first-year Latin teacher. I remember his class well...

It was spring semester, 1964, and my first attempt at learning a foreign language. I was *scared*. In fact, I was *scared to death*. I was smart enough, I guess, and I worked hard enough, I suppose, but, for a while, Latin seemed like my *nemesis*, a subject I simply *could not* master. Worse, Latin threatened my survival strategy at home: to avoid, at all cost, the attention of very unhappy parents. Kids who called attention to themselves in *my* home did not fare well. In fact, they did not fare well at all! And in *my* home, getting a poor grade was just about the *worst* way to get attention.

Mr. Antoniak recognized my fears and somehow, by the grace of God, divined their origin. He knew I was terrified, and not so much of *Latin* as of *my parents*. As a good teacher, he knew that my fears were *distracting* me, preventing me from focusing on the task at hand. And so, one day in class, as my mind wandered far from the lesson, he intervened.

“**JOHN,**” he boomed, in a sonorous, bass voice, “**KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE BALL.**”

Simple, no-nonsense words that woke me *right* up, got me to focus on the assignment before me, and, I am happy to report, *most* assignments ever since! Simple words from a good man of simple faith. Simple words, as fitting today as they were then.

We are living in a time of great unrest: unrest in the *world*, unrest in our *nation*, unrest in our *families*, unrest in our *hearts*. Distractions *abound*, distractions that keep us from doing *what needs to be done*. And what needs to be done?

**KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE BALL.** Love God and keep his commandments! Come to Mass and hear the word of God. Go from Mass and preach the Gospel with your lives.

**KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE BALL.** Focus on family! Spend time with family members. Break bread with them. *Pray* with them, before you separate in the morning, when you gather in the evening, at every meal, before you kiss goodnight. And come to Mass together, if you *possibly* can.

**KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE BALL.** Receive the sacraments. Receive them often, *penance* as well as Holy Communion.

**KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE BALL.** Be reconciled with one another! Be reconciled with those who voted of late, and those who did *not*. Be reconciled with those who voted as *you* did, and those who did *not*. Come back together, and stay together, as families, friends, and neighbors.

Because “by your perseverance [in *these* things] you will secure your lives.” Amen.

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Luke (21:5-19)

While some people were speaking about  
how the temple was adorned with costly stones and votive offerings,  
Jesus said, “All that you see here—  
the days will come when there will not be left  
a stone upon another stone that will not be thrown down.”

Then they asked him,  
“Teacher, when will this happen?  
And what sign will there be when all these things are about to happen?”

He answered,  
“See that you not be deceived,  
for many will come in my name, saying,  
‘I am he,’ and ‘The time has come.’  
Do not follow them!  
When you hear of wars and insurrections,  
do not be terrified; for such things must happen first,  
but it will not immediately be the end.”  
Then he said to them,  
“Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.  
There will be powerful earthquakes, famines, and plagues from place to place;  
and awesome sights and mighty signs will come from the sky.

“Before all this happens, however,  
they will seize and persecute you,  
they will hand you over to the synagogues and to prisons,  
and they will have you led before kings and governors because of my name.  
It will lead to your giving testimony.  
Remember, you are not to prepare your defense beforehand,  
for I myself shall give you a wisdom in speaking  
that all your adversaries will be powerless to resist or refute.  
You will even be handed over by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends,  
and they will put some of you to death.  
You will be hated by all because of my name,  
but not a hair on your head will be destroyed.  
By your perseverance you will secure your lives.”