

August 15<sup>th</sup> was the day that the Attorney Generals grand jury report on the abuse of minors in the Catholic Church was published. It was the feast of Our Blessed Mother's Assumption. I could not help but be taken up by the imagery presented in the first reading of the day's Mass, from the book of Revelation. Chapter 12.

*Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman, robed with the sun, standing on the moon, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.<sup>2</sup> She was pregnant, and in labor, crying aloud in the pangs of childbirth.<sup>3</sup> Then a second sign appeared in the sky: there was a huge red dragon with seven heads and ten horns, and each of the seven heads crowned with a coronet.*

*<sup>4</sup> Its tail swept a third of the stars from the sky and hurled them to the ground, and the dragon stopped in front of the woman as she was at the point of giving birth, so that it could eat the child as soon as it was born.<sup>5</sup> The woman was delivered of a boy, the son who was to rule all the nations with an iron sceptre, and the child was taken straight up to God and to his throne,*

*<sup>6</sup> while the woman escaped into the desert, where God had prepared a place for her to be looked after for twelve hundred and sixty days. And now war broke out in heaven, when Michael with his angels attacked the dragon. The dragon fought back with his angels,*

*<sup>8</sup> but they were defeated and driven out of heaven. The great dragon, the primeval serpent, known as the devil or Satan, who had led all the world astray, was hurled down to the earth and his angels were hurled down with him.<sup>9</sup> Then I heard a voice shout from heaven, 'Salvation and power and empire for ever have been won by our God, and all authority for his Christ, now that the accuser, who accused our brothers day and night before our God, has been brought down.*

*<sup>11</sup> They have triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word to which they bore witness, because even in the face of death they did not cling to life.*

*<sup>12</sup> So let the heavens rejoice and all who live there; but for you, earth and sea, disaster is coming -- because the devil has gone down to you in a rage, knowing that he has little time left.'*

*<sup>13</sup> As soon as the dragon found himself hurled down to the earth, he sprang in pursuit of the woman, the mother of the male child,*

*<sup>14</sup> but she was given a pair of the great eagle's wings to fly away from the serpent into the desert, to the place where she was to be looked after for a time, two times and half a time.*

*<sup>15</sup> So the serpent vomited water from his mouth, like a river, after the woman, to sweep her away in the current,*

*<sup>16</sup> but the earth came to her rescue; it opened its mouth and swallowed the river spewed from the dragon's mouth.*

*<sup>17</sup> Then the dragon was enraged with the woman and went away to make war on the rest of her children, who obey God's commandments and have in themselves the witness of Jesus.*

My dear people, this week has been one of the most difficult weeks in the Church, and this letter is a most difficult one to write. I am sure that this week has been a heart breaking one for you also....and I thank you for coming to Church this weekend in spite of all the different reactions that are in your heart.

The devil is in a fury and continues to wage war and we are witnesses to its effects. The devil has influenced the hearts and minds of some priests and bishops in their perpetrating crimes of sexual abuse of minors and the cover-ups that accompanied it.

These crimes have been spelled out in great detail and at great length by the report of the

grand jury. This report has been printed in the papers and reported in the media. I could tell you that the report is unfair; I could tell you that we are the victims of prejudice and anti-Catholicism. But, no matter how you cut it, a number of priests did terrible things to children and to minors. Sometimes the officials of the church acted properly, but too often, they did not. Our hearts ache for the victims of sexual abuse. Our prayers must accompany them along with our call for a purer Church and justice.

We all know that child abuse is a huge problem in all areas of society. We know that it is present in families, other religions, organizations and institutions, if you follow the news, the “Me too” movement has brought so much to the surface, and how abuse has been present and covered up in Hollywood, swimming, wrestling and gymnastic teams, the boy scouts and numerous other religious denominations. But within the church is the last place we should expect to find children being abused.... The misdeeds of a very small percentage of priests, have betrayed all of us. We are outraged, we are angry; we are humiliated by the sins and crimes of these men.

Some Church officials decided to be lenient and tolerant. Some looked the other way. They were weak when they should have been strong. And instead of rooting out the evil it was allowed to grow in our midst. And many have suffered because of it. All of us suffer. Whether we are innocent or guilty, priest or layperson, we suffer, but no one suffers more than the physical victims themselves. As a priest, my heart aches for the victims, the children and for their parents. As a pastor my heart aches for my people who are shocked and wounded.

I know that the press does not have a great love for the church. I know, that anti-Catholicism is alive and well in all levels of our society. But, the Attorney General. and the Press are not the cause of our problem. In reality they may be the chastening rod that Almighty God uses to cleanse the Church. The problem was caused by men who allowed their terrible passions to rule their lives and the Church did not police herself as she should have. And if you know history, you know that when the Church does not police herself, then the government steps in and does the policing for us.

And so, today, the Church is shaken to her roots. Yes, the Church is shaken to her roots but it is in her roots that she finds her strength. And what are her roots. Our belief in the love of Jesus Christ and the Salvation He offers us. Our faith in the Sacraments that He has given us. Our roots are in the Mass and Holy Communion and in our Blessed Mother. Our roots are in our charity to the poor and needy. Our roots are our parish family. Our roots are in our Holy Catholic Faith and not in the insanity and the mental illness and the evil that causes people to do terrible things to each other.

I hope and pray you will remain committed to your faith. If we do, then our church will be stronger and purer and cleaner and brighter for having gone through this time of great suffering. May we be purified and made stronger so that we will be more determined to build up His Kingdom and build up the Church which Our Lord Jesus established. May God help us and Bless us.