During the American civil war President Abraham Lincoln met with a group of ministers for a prayer breakfast. At one point one of the ministers said: ‘*Mr. President, let us pray that God is on our side’. Lincoln, who was not a regular church goer but was nevertheless a man of deep, though unconventional faith, showed far greater insight. ‘No, gentlemen,’ he replied. ‘Let us pray that we are on God’s side.’*

Growing up, one of the words my mother often quoted was the well-known classic piece of wisdom: *never discuss politics or religion.* I might add the corollary to that by noting that this especially applies if you have had a couple of shots of Jamison’s.

It is odd to me that as our nation grows increasing secular, with strong efforts constantly made to push faith and religion out of the context of ordinary life, politicians of all parties often quote the Bible and even God himself to prove points about whatever position they have taken. Very often the hearers of such quote, depending on how they feel about that particular politician will be quick to say either: he/she is right-God is on our side or on the other hand, if they disagree with that particular speaker, thy might say what a hypocrite and quote some action or view that does not seem to reflect the values of the Sacred Scriptures.

It is dangerous to speak about politics and politicians, especially in the capital of the state of Maryland. I believe that politicians, like lawyers, doctors, nurses, priests, teachers and so on almost always choose their career for good and caring reasons. Yet, just like there are struggles and temptations in every call of life, it is understandable that some political men and women may get grow cynical, power-hungry, and lose sight of the ideals that lead them into what can be a noble profession.

Many Americans are concerned how divided we are as a nation. I am, but it is good to keep things in perspective: we once fought a civil war that almost destroyed our nation. To read history is to know that there has always been some hardball played with strong elbows on all sides of the aisle. What is concerning is that these debates has very filtered down to the entire nation. You almost have to check out another person before you speak about a political issue less your either be *called member of the deplorable who hang out in Walmart or a socialist whose only goal it to destroy America*. Some commentators have used the word Tribes to describe where we are as a people, something like the Shiites and the Sunnis, where you tribe takes precedence over your country.

Our first reading today is from the prophet Amos who was a fierce advocate of social justice: we hear him warn the people: *Hear this, you who trample upon the needy and destroy the poor of the land!* This reading could lead us to talk about the need to protect the undocumented immigrants coming into our nation, to speak about those who are on death row because they could not afford a strong legal defense, or say that we by our lack of care for the environment that we are not leaving a safe world for generations to come. Still, could we say that there is anyone who rights are more threatened than a baby in the eighth or ninth month of life in her mother’s womb? Might we say that the rights of religious people who want to live their values are also often challenged?

God is for all people, calling for respect and dignity for all our fellow human beings. Naturally, we do and should have strong convictions and beliefs. We should speak them out with courage. However, when we find ourselves verbally attacking the person for his or her ideas, then we are moving toward tribalism. When we cannot discuss what is in our hearts with one another, it is certainly hard to recognize our common humanity. Many people are very angry, to the point that is causing them undue stress because of how they see those with whom they disagree.

Catholics cannot separate their daily lives and politics from the Gospel. We carry out faith out through the doors of our church to daily life. We are called to love our enemies. More and more I think we are seeing those who are not in line with our thinking not as fellow citizens but as the enemy. Can you pray for Donald Trump? Can you pray for Nancy Pelosi or Chuck Schumer? Can you love respect your brother- in- law who watches Fox News 24 hours a day, or your niece who is rabid Rachel Maddow fan? It is not easy being a follower of Jesus. Can you live with St. Paul’s words that we heard read from our pulpit today: *First of all, I ask that supplications, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings be offered for* everyone, *for kings and for all in authority, that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life*? It is hard to resist joining a tribe. But deeper than even our love our country or our political beliefs is our call to follow the one who told us to resist hatred and anger toward another.