

Homily for September 5th 2018

When returning home from holiday last Thursday my wife Peggy, son Thomas and I were travelling from Victoria to Calgary. Just east of Sicamous, a rock dislodged from a cliff and landed within a couple of feet of our van. It bounced up, hit the bumper, skirted under the car, hit the front tire of the bike closest to the rear of the van. This changed the rock's trajectory from hitting the car behind us and harmlessly landed somewhere on the shoulder of the road. A second difference in the rock's landing could have resulted in it being further in front of us and thus bounding up and through the windshield, or landing on the van, instead of in front of it.

It was an experience I will never forget, and I am so thankful for the gift of life and being here today and not in the purgatorial state, let me tell you!

This experience helped me to realize yet again that life can be a dangerous journey and we must be on the look out for those rocks that want to take us out.

St Paul understood that there are hazards on the journey of faith that are equally treacherous and if not avoided can cause great damage to another family, that is the Church.

These are the rocks of jealousy and quarrelling which he saw on display in the Corinthian Church. Jealousy, if left unchecked, has a way of obstructing our vision which in turn lead to a kind of bitter strife in the Church which can result in her going out of control and cause spiritual death to individuals and to communities.

We need to be always on the look out for these danger signs because of our propensity as human beings to the sin of pride. Within the Corinthian Church this pride took the form of factionalism where some favoured St. Paul who had founded the Church, and others Apollos, who came after to first pastor the Church.

What Paul wanted his readers to understand is that we are called to is the kind of humility where those who serve the Church are in positions of leadership not for themselves but to assist people in coming to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to live for him. Those who belong to the Church are to see their leaders as those who are entrusted with nurturing the people of God, realizing that God alone gives the growth.

When within the Church family we allow for human inclinations to drive her the Church is no longer a safe place. When this happens, Jesus needs to rebuke her, through those who are willing to recognize his Lordship, not as the demons did in a distorted way, but as Peter did in asking for Jesus to rebuke the fever infecting his mother-in-law.

I will speak of this in more detail in my Sunday homily on September 16th, but for now let me say that these texts are so timely considering the most recent reports about sex abuse and cover-up in the Church. There have been so many who have been hit with the rocks of pride because of the misuse of power by those in the Church who had been entrusted with the

family's safety. Many others have not been hit directly but are shaken up in a way like I experienced in my near miss last Thursday.

It is my prayer that at St. Peter's this family will increasingly experience a kind of pastoral care where we are discovering that it is safe to be in this family and on this journey as we pray in the words of today's collect.

"May your grace, O Lord, we pray, at all times go before us and follow after us and make us always determined to carry out good works"

Such grace is able to be operative when God's deacons, priests, bishops, archbishops, cardinals and the Pope understand our common purpose is to be servants working together on your behalf as with you we journey through this world; looking out for the rocks the devil would send our way so as to live well in this world so as to make it safely home to the next.