

ON STANDING WATCH

I can go months without watching The Weather Channel but if there is a big snowstorm coming or a hurricane coming, then I am glad that the weather channel exists. More than that. I am glad that there are all those men and women who have devoted their lives to achieve a greater understanding of our weather and help us prepare for what might be coming our way very soon. Their presence, their preparation, their standing watch really makes a difference in safety and survival.

THE WATCH

For twenty years this sailor has stood the watch. While some of us were in our bunks at night this sailor stood the watch. While some of us were in school learning our trade this shipmate stood the watch. Yes, even before some of us were born into this world this shipmate stood the watch. In those years when the storm clouds of war were seen brewing on the horizon of history this shipmate stood the watch. Many times he would cast an eye ashore and see his family standing there needing his guidance and help, needing that hand to hold during those hard times but still he stood the watch. He stood the watch for twenty years. He stood the watch so that we, our families and our fellow countrymen could sleep soundly in safety, each and every night knowing that a sailor stood the watch. Today we are here to say: 'Shipmate...the watch stands relieved, relieved by those you have trained, guided, and led. Shipmate you stand relieved; we have the watch....' "Boatswain, standby to pipe the side...Shipmate's going ashore."

So we have those in the science of weather forecasting keeping watch and those who serve our country in the military keeping watch and there are many other areas where untold persons are on the watch to protect us from evils and dangers. In today's first reading the prophet Ezekiel is spoken to by God and told that he was being called by God to be a watchman for Israel. Because Israel needed such a watchman.

Keeping watch is part of what I do for you as your pastor. I strive to bring a word to you from our God that will give life and sustain and warn you and challenge you daily. Why? Because we get so absorbed in living our daily lives that we lose sight of the truth that we are still locked in a mortal and spiritual combat on a daily basis. Yes, the outcome of this struggle has already been

achieved. Jesus has won the victory over sin and death. But the battles still rage and there are still casualties. These need to be prevented.

My question this weekend is: Do we realize how important it is for at least one person to be keeping watch in our homes? Always. Daily. Without dozing off. Without growing inattentive. Without becoming preoccupied. Each household, each home is in need of someone standing watch, to be on the lookout for anything which could damage or destroy our families and the life of our families and therefore the life of our communities. Each needs someone on watch to call out the danger or the potential danger. It is no longer enough to put locks on our doors and lock our cars against vandalism and theft. The truly dangerous things that enter our homes often come in electronically, via our computers, our Smartphones, our Tablets, our Xboxes and other forms of entertainment and relaxation.

Other truly dangerous things enter our homes in our own minds and hearts—in our attitudes, our mindsets, our way of seeing things, our way of speaking—we bring them right into our homes. Someone must be responsible to watch and to challenge—for the good of all—for the common good—those things that can eat away at the fabric of our homes and communities. Jesus, in the gospel, counsels that when there is an estrangement in family, work at finding a way to be reconciled. The role of the watchman. In Romans, Saint Paul counsels that the commandments can be summed up by “loving our neighbor as ourselves.” The watchman in the home sets the standard and leads by example. Just as the watchman does.

There are many who observe today that the woman, the mother is the one who holds sway in the household besides working in the world. That is evident to me many times. But there is a very important role for the father, the husband, the man. Keep watch. Faithfully. For your family and for the common good.