

Homily for the Eighteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time (A)  
St. Joseph's Neier August 3, 2014  
Rev. Kevin Schmittgens

Central Idea: Once we begin to trust that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, we can live our lives in hope and joy.

*What can separate us from the love of Christ?*

Existence is dangerous. You can't even imagine how dangerous it is.

On February 15, 2013, a little over a year ago, at around 9:20 am local time, a meteor heavier than the Eiffel Tower bounced into the Earth's atmosphere over a populated area of Russia in the Ural Mountains. It was going 42,000 miles per hour or 60 times the speed of sound. About 18 miles above the earth, as it entered the stratosphere, it exploded and disintegrated. The energy released was 20 times the power of the atomic bomb at Hiroshima. (That's a modest estimate, I don't want to worry you...) There was a bright flash that lasted 5 seconds. People reported temporary blindness because it was several times brighter than the sun. Luckily for the citizens, the atmosphere took the brunt of the energy. Two and a half minutes later the shock wave hit the town of Chelyabinsk, blowing out windows all over the place. Most of the people injured were hit by flying glass, shattered by the sound. In all 1500 people were injured. Not bad, considering. The debris in the atmosphere got caught in the jet streams and has circled the entire earth. Pretty wild!

It was the largest meteor "event" in the past one hundred years. That one was also in Russia over Siberia in 1908 and it was 1000 times the power of Hiroshima.

And this is the scary part of all of this: No one saw it coming until it started to streak across the sky...

So, to put it bluntly, from out of nowhere, the sky explodes. It is like the intergalactic version of Game of Thrones.

I could go on and on about other terrifying things like earthquakes and supervolcanos and Ebola viruses, not to mention home cooked, man-made threats, but I will stop at meteors. That should be enough to get the point across. (By the way, a meteorite is the name of that which lands...)

I tell you, living here on Planet Earth is a dangerous endeavor.

That is why Paul's beautiful admonition to the Romans, Romans 8, to be exact, is such a powerful, hopeful, encouraging and wondrous thought. Paul lists all those things I just

talked about: *anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth*, Whatever this little old universe seeks to throw at us, the creator of the universe will be there for us.

*What can separate us from the love of Christ?*

Paul's letter is not just all rosy and positive, it is also empowering. It gives us the courage to live life, and live life boldly. It irks me when certain skeptics talk about how Christians are weak. Lived Christianity, true Christianity is bold, courageous and gutsy. For instance, the two aid workers infected with the Ebola virus, Dr. Kent Brantley and Nancy Writebol worked for a Christian organization called Samaritan's Purse. Today we are asked to pray for and help our own missionaries in Bolivia, including Fr. Tim Noelker, who grew up here at Neier. What courage it takes to go from Beaufort to La Paz! We see that same courage in Dana and Mark, who may do the most courageous thing I know, to bring a new life into this dangerous, "meteor strewn" world.

I will admit that a large "meteor event" like what happened in the Urals is extremely rare, thank God. But let's face it, we all have situations and episodes and experiences like that which burst suddenly into our lives. It can be anything and everything, undetected, unexpected, startling, out of the clear blue sky. Existence is still fairly dangerous and unpredictable. And yet, and this is the beauty of our faith, we have a God that loves us through it all, shining brightly, more powerful than anything that the cosmos throws at us.