

Speaking to the soul



Challenges

Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. 1 Peter 5:8-9

I have visited Africa on a number of occasions and have gone on several safaris. They are not at all like safari parks in this country where you are guaranteed to see a wide range of animals. On a safari there are some days when you will see very little, if anything, and so you need to be on the lookout all the time. On one occasion I went on a walking safari. Our guide had a gun with him because of the possibility of danger and, as you can imagine, we were incredibly vigilant as we walked together. In the event, nothing dangerous happened and I live to tell the tale.

Peter was acutely conscious of the dangers that confronted the early Church. He knew from painful personal experience that the Church was threatened by the authorities and many individuals who were eager to see Christianity snuffed out. He knew that there were also people trying to wreck the Church from the inside by spreading gossip and false doctrines. This meant that everyone needed to be constantly on the alert.

But being forewarned wasn't enough by itself. Peter's readers needed to be forearmed as well. They needed to ensure that they were strong enough to face up to the challenges that the devil would throw at them. The same is true today. We may not face the physical threats that Peter's readers confronted, but we need to be aware of the continual challenges that are posed by our materialistic, secular society, which has no time for God. If we are not alert to these pressures, the danger is that we will be defeated by them and the Church will fall silent. Peter would say to us today exactly what he said to his readers 2,000 years ago – we need to stand firm and be strong in our faith.

QUESTION

What is the biggest challenge for which we need to be equipped to face today?

PRAYER

Lord God, help us stand firm for you whatever the influences and pressures of our society. Amen

Photograph - Belfast Cathedral Lenten Communion burse

