

The Fish Net

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Autumn 2016

Dear Friends,

This past summer Susan and I went to the Redpath Waterfront Festival in Toronto. There were many different attractions there but the most popular by far were the “Tall Ships” and of these, three ships in particular drew a lot of attention. The first was the “Pride of Baltimore II”, a replica of an American privateer from the War of 1812. The second was “El Galeon”, a replica of a Spanish galleon from the 1500’s. The third, which I found the most fascinating of all, was the “Draken Harald Harfagre”, a replica Viking ship from 1000 years ago.

It was fascinating to tour that ship and listen to the crew members describe the boat. What I found just as fascinating though was their description of the voyage from Norway across the North Atlantic. Since it is an open boat and so exposed to the elements, it didn’t matter how many layers of clothing they wore; they were forever cold and wet. The crew members also spoke about the huge waves, how some would crash over the prow and how the water droplets would turn to ice before hitting the deck. When I got home I checked out some of their videos on their website and the sheer drama of the voyage was made real; the open wooden ship bouncing up and down in the tremendous waves and navigating through the ice fields. It was wonderful to watch and I am sure that it was the experience of a life time for the young crew members.

This was of course a very dangerous voyage and for this reason the Viking ship was accompanied by a support vessel just in case something went wrong. Little mention was made of it however and it certainly doesn’t appear in any of the

pictures or videos but even so, it was there, and it occurred to me that there is a parallel between this and that marvellous voyage we call life.

In many ways our lives are like a voyage across a huge ocean. Sometimes the waters are calm and all is well. We can look at the stars above and marvel at the goodness and beauty of life. Then there are the times when we slowly pick our way through the icebergs, aware of the danger. Sometimes we may feel lost in the fog, peering about trying to find the way forward. And then there are those times when we are caught in the storms and it seems as if we must surely founder. Just as that Viking ship though was accompanied by its support vessel, unseen and unheard yet always present, so it is with us. Our "support vessel" is of course God himself. There is an old Breton fisherman's prayer that goes:

Protect me O God, for thy sea is so wide
and my boat is so small.

This God does which is something to remember and give thanks for in this season of thanksgiving.

Shawn