

## Fr KEVIN DILLON'S HOMILY DATED 4.08.2018

Over the last twenty or thirty years I've had a fairly long association with war veterans, especially Vietnam war veterans and as a result of being aware of their issues and struggles. I've become aware of many elements of legislation within the context of Department of Veterans affairs. To be fair, the job of the department is to administer the legislation as it stands, but the legislation in some, not all, aspects is baffling, to say the least.

One aspect that I have been aware of is a piece of legislation which says that for a veteran to be given the TPI – totally and permanently impaired – rate of pension, they must prove that they stopped work due to war caused disabilities, 'alone'.

What's in a word? For many veterans trying to prove that word 'alone' is very difficult. For example, why did Richmond beat Geelong last night? Was it because Daniel Menzel missed the first goal, which was a point? There are probably a thousand reasons why you could say that game could have gone the other way. But it didn't. Is there one reason alone? There isn't. The way life is, we never have things happen for one reason alone.

People make choices and decisions along the way, sometimes they are good ones and sometimes they are disastrous, and all sorts of consequences follow as a result. Why did you come here to this mass? You might say because I can't come another time, or I've always come to this mass, maybe I was just driving past, or I nearly didn't come, but I thought I should or must because my mother told me to go to mass fifty years ago and I still do. Any one of fifty reasons we could put forward.

As human beings we do strange things. We make interesting decisions, some dangerous things in the moment. We wonder why someone did that. Maybe they were having a bad day. Who knows? We do things for all sorts of different reasons including why we chose to come here.

Jesus talks a bit today about decision making. All these people have followed him. He takes the game right up to them and asks, 'Why are you here? Are you here because somehow or other you've got the message of what my message is to you, of God's love, somehow you've picked up on what I've got to leave to you through my presence in the gift of food and drink in the Eucharist? Have you really picked up the spiritual meaning of what I'm about, or', he says, 'did you come here because you were hoping to get another free feed?' (Of course, he wouldn't necessarily have used those words.)

They say, 'Hey, we went along to listen to Jesus and we didn't have to cook when we got home because he provided it all for us and it was fantastic. There were even leftovers.'

So, what's brought them along? Jesus has a fair idea that some of them have come simply because of greed. Greed for money, or for food. But he says, you're missing the point of what this is all about. If you're going to choose, choose for the right reasons.

One of the complications for us as human beings, is that we don't often enough analyse why we are doing things. When you get home write down the reasons why you have come to mass. For those on Light FM listening to this, have a think. Why did I wake up early this morning to listen to this mass? I could have slept in? I could be listening to something else, but I've tuned in to listen to mass.

It's not a bad idea to go down that path and analyse why we do what we do. Sometimes we do good things, and we don't give ourselves credit for the reasons we do it, sometimes we do bad things – or simply not good things – and we think we're doing a good job.

For instance, we have a rich uncle who is getting very sick and he's not getting a lot of attention. We think, here's an opportunity. He's only a couple of suburbs away I could start to call in every day. He's not terminally ill, he's well enough to change his will. He doesn't have any children. He's been a bachelor all his life. And so suddenly, all the visits go to the uncle and everyone thinks you're terrific but deep down, no, not the most noble of motives is there.

Other people look after elderly relatives who have nothing to leave behind and they do so because they love them, or because they believe, this is what family is all about. The same situation but the reason we do something makes the difference between what's worthwhile and what isn't.

We say people make sacrifices to send their children to a Catholic school, and that's true, but do they make that sacrifice because they believe that that proper grounding in Catholic faith will give them something worthwhile to negotiate life and the challenges of the world, or do they do that because they want to get them into an affordable college and they just want to tick those boxes, nothing to do with faith, nothing to do with Jesus. Same situation – good reasons and not so good, not necessarily bad reasons, but not what they should be.

On the other hand, we can do things that on the surface look non-descript but are actually marvellous reasons. So, somebody rings you up and says, 'Would you like to come to the footy with me? I'm going to see Hawthorn play Essendon.' They barrack for Hawthorn. You can't stand

footy. But the person who asks you is lonely. They have rung you because you are the friend who may give them companionship. So, you say, 'Yeah, I'll go along.' And you go and it's raining, and you don't get a seat undercover, it's awful, but you've done it out of friendship, there's nothing in it for you. On the surface it looks like two mates at the footy, and that's true – you're mates and you're at the football - but you couldn't be less interested, but you've done it for all the right reasons.

Looking at the reasons why we do things is so important. In preparing children for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, whether it's their first or later down the track, it's always worthwhile to say to them, 'Don't just tell us what you did, but tell us why you did it.' It's one thing for a little boy to come along and say, 'I hit my little brother.' That's true, nothing but the truth, but it's not the whole truth, which is that I hit my little brother because I'm jealous of him.

When kids come along in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and go that step further, then they have really got the message. It's not only true of children, but of all of us. Look at what we do, and why we do it. The good, and the not so good. Even the things that are mischief making, or even malicious. Not just to say I did this, but why did I do this, what was I thinking when I did that. So, a little bit of analysis of our motivation can be a good thing. On the positive side it might be that we are shaping up a little better than we gave ourselves credit for, or, on the other hand while we are basking in glory thinking we are doing great things, we know that deep down there is a good deal of selfishness going on.

So, we look at all those things and we subject it to analysis. We see it in society, in the big picture we have Royal Commissions and enquiries. We need to go through that ourselves, examine our conscience, why we have done what we have done, why we have chosen what we have chosen. Sometimes we will be able to sit back and think – it didn't go too bad on that one. Other times, maybe we might think – no, a bit stupid, a bit selfish. We learn from the experience. The analysis of what we choose and what we do. Jesus took the people who followed him through it. We should try to put ourselves through it as well.