

Fr. KEVIN DILLON'S HOMILY DATES 29.09.18

Life is somewhat of a challenge, particularly in a very complex world where not only does everybody have an opinion, but particularly with the advent of Twitter and Facebook and everything else. Everybody has an opportunity to express that opinion here, there, and everywhere. And so we tend to become a little more deeply entrenched in what we think is important and what isn't, what is right and what is wrong and all the rest of it. So I'll probably put my foot in it, as far as some of you are concerned, in the next few minutes. But that's ok, some of the things are just an opinion, and you're entitled to yours and I'm entitled to mine.

But as best we can, it's a matter of trying to join things together into what is consistent within our shared understanding of the Gospel. It's applying it specifically that's the tricky and hazardous bit. But I guess over the last few days especially, I've looked at maybe events that are in the news that we all have to react to and so on. And I think where is this all going? So we're told by the banks royal commission that yesterday was "a day of shame" for the banks and the financial institutions. This has been going on for quite some months, and indeed they are found to have been dishonest and greedy and well, that's a matter of major concern. I must admit when I heard the story about the "day of shame" I thought, well that's yesterday, what about Monday and Tuesday. Will that lesson be learnt? Will there be changes as a result of that? Or in 12 or 6 months' time will the greed, deception and everything else be just as bad as it ever was.

Then we look at the events of the week and we look at the ABC. Now I've got no strong opinion, certainly no inside knowledge of all of that. But when an organisation is funded by the taxpayer of Australia, and where the Chief Director is getting nearly a million dollars a year, and in successive days the managing director is sacked and then the chair of the board who determined the sacking then resigned. The word disarray comes to mind, say "what in the world is going on?" And these banking, financial institutions, the ABC- these are the things which we used to, maybe at our peril, but we used to trust as having our best interest at heart and behaving with a sense of integrity. And then maybe, this might get me into trouble in terms of the footy. There's this stoush between Mick Malthouse and Moana Hope espousing the AFLW football. And I looked at the reports of the stories of this debate

that's been going on, and I didn't see anywhere there any reference to the fact that less than two weeks ago, the sister of one of the Collingwood players had died as a result of a collision on the footy field. And that's serious stuff, and in terms of where that's all heading, a life has been lost in the context of a normal sport. That doesn't happen very often, and so when a debate comes on in terms of maybe too much has been pushed too soon at too high a physical level, well let that enter into the debate.

But maybe because it's a no go zone, no one was prepared to mention it. And then the other tricky area; pill testing, and safe injecting rooms. As one who, over the journey, has had a lot to do with people who have an addiction to drugs and especially to ice and so on. I can't quite figure out how people can produce any legal substance to authorities, and then be sent happily to the venue, or on their way, or maybe out to their car. I don't know about you but I can't quite figure those things out. And I worry, I do, because I worry who's out there. I've conducted quite a number of funerals of people who have been killed in a road accident where the other driver was on ice. The thought of someone going into a safe injecting room, being able to inject ice into them, and then in a certain length of time just get into a car and go home- where is all that at? I can't figure that out.

And I pick up the Gospel today, and it's a pretty solid Gospel that Jesus puts before us. And certainly as it's read, often Jesus gives us pretty extreme examples. "If your hand or foot should cause you to sin, cut it off. Or your eye, pluck it out." Effectively, what He's saying is, if Jesus was speaking in Australia He would say, in terms of our life and our moral decisions, we've gotta be fair dinkum. We've gotta be genuine and sincere, and we have to be honest. Some years ago a songwriter by the name of Billy Joel wrote a song about honesty. "Honesty is such a lonely word. Everyone is so untrue. Honesty is hardly ever heard, and mostly what I need from you. I can always find someone to say they sympathise, if I wear my heart out on my sleeve. But I don't want some pretty face to tell me pretty lies, all I want is someone to believe." Put that into the community stage, and we say well, where do we go. Who do we trust? Do we trust the banks? Do we trust the people in the media? Do we trust the government, state or federal, local? Do we trust the church?

So many of those cornerstones of trust that were there not all that long ago, are under an enormous cloud of “who do you trust?” And it’s not easy to find our way. Jesus comes in today with a fairly thumping approach. Saying you’ve got to be genuine, you’ve got to have integrity. Now how that applies in any number of different areas, particularly in the community area of media and government and church and whatever, is always difficult. I can’t change those things, and nor can you. The only person we can change, the only person we can make totally trustworthy, is ourselves. So in really that sense of honesty is such a lonely word, that applies to us as well. Jesus calls us to be honest. You might say “well that’s alright, I always pay my debts.” No no, it’s much more than that. It’s much more than financial honesty. It’s an honesty in terms of friendship, of relationships. Maybe of knowing in certain circumstances where we’re in a path that’s not going to be good for us or another person. On any number of different levels. Maybe we’re getting a bit too fond, of maybe not another person but another substance. Or we’re gambling too much. Or somehow or other we can see someone that’s on a path of self-destruction but we say “no it’s not my business”, and so we pull back. Whereas within we think I really should do something about this.

This is where the prayer for integrity and honesty is really important. It’s not a matter of cutting off eyes, hands and feet and so on. These are the sort of extreme examples which Jesus often uses in His parables to get us to think about these things, and not just sort of drift. It is so easy to think “no I don’t have a problem”, but we might have. And our challenge with this Gospel is to say, “am I really a person of honesty with myself? And I can’t change the government, laws, and a lot of things in life. But I can look after, in the right way, myself and my own attitude.” Let’s ask that we can be people of integrity, that honesty is not a lonely word. And maybe if that starts to be a bit of a turn, like every other journey it starts with one step. And the one step we can make is our own. And maybe the world can become a place more where trust is something which comes back genuinely into our lives, and the sense of direction is a little bit more clear. That’s certainly what Jesus asks of us, to be people of honesty and integrity, and to put aside those things which impinge of that, and challenge it, and nullify it.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.