

Fr KEVIN DILLON'S HOMILY DATED 21.10.18

This may not be riveting news for you but it was an important day for me as it is for you when you get down on the same path. I bought a new car last week, not new new, I've only owned one brand new car in my life. But this is new to me, it's ten years old, but it's a very nice vehicle, hopefully will serve me quite a while. And as you know what you would do, you put things in, take things out of the old car and put it in the new car and so on. And I had to take with me and put into this new car, a special passenger – a little yellow rubber duckie. Unfortunately you squeeze him and he doesn't make noise. Like you remember that rubber duckie 'You're the one, you make bath time lots of fun' is that right, something like that? 'Rubber duckie I'm awfully fond of you' who was that? Ernie....that's right! And, so anyhow, there is a story behind this. It belonged, it was in the car of a very dear friend of mine who sadly died a few months back.

And about ten years ago, he and his wife were in their car and he felt a sort of a wobble in the wheel and guess the tyre pressure was down. Got out of the car, pulled down at the side of the road and there right beside the car was this little rubber duckie. So he got back into the car and said to his wife "Oh I've got a present for you" and she was not all that impressed but this was the present. So it ended up in his car for the best part, for almost ten years and when the car was recently sold, as I was helping him get ready for sale, I souvenired the rubber duckie. So it's a reminder to me of my mate – a fellow with whom I've done lots of interesting things together over the years. So he sits up there on the dash and surveys the scenery and so on and with the bright yellow colour, he's not exactly colour coded into the black dashboard. But it's a tangible reminder of a very very dear friend....we all do that.

We have photos, we have maybe little areas of memorabilia whereby we connect with people who we can't connect with in that person to person way. I conducted a funeral recently when they told a story of how this gentleman died. In his wallet, his wife found, and I found this amazing – she had never been through his wallet before – does that happen very often – I don't know. She found a photo of herself taken way back when they first knew each other, he carried that photo in his wallet for more

than 50 years of their marriage. And nothing remarkable about that, but the very normality of having something as a very tangible reminder of someone, in this case now, that he doesn't have any more. But that was one of many ways in which he expressed how much he loved her. So we're used to that, if we were to wander into any one of your homes, we'd find all sorts of pictures and memories and souvenirs from trips away and so on.

The things that remind us and bring back into our life of the kids and the school. My dad's watch which I've been wearing ever since he died, I wear it every day. On my chalice is a cross that came from my mother, was actually her mother's engagement ring – melted down and made into a cross. These are the things that are really important to us. To connect with people when there's not the possibility of a normal connection. Normally, we can sit down and talk with each other and go out for dinner and eat with each other and so on, but often that can't happen. People are overseas, people have died and gone before us, but we still want to link into them. Jesus knew that part of human nature which is common to us all and so knowing that He wasn't going to be walking the earth and teaching as he did just for those three short years, He wanted to leave us something that we could connect with; something which was really really personal and what could be more personal than Himself?

And that's what the gift of the Eucharist is about, and that's why this First Holy Communion for these nine children at this mass is so important than the others, who over this weekend and some over next weekend, will be receiving Our Lord for the first time in Holy Communion. The whole thing is a little baffling in some ways, and yet is very basic, very ordinary in other ways. The way we take on board the presence of another person into our life and maybe modern science has demonstrated something for us which may be until recently we couldn't quite figure out. It's in the area of the way in which things like transplants of organs, even the heart, liver, all these things can come from another person and become part of another person. May be the most obvious of all has been with us for quite some time, and that's in blood transfusions. When I was at Geelong, there was a lady I went to see at the hospital and she said "You'll never guess what happened to me today", and I said "Well, no".

And she said “As you know I’ve had major surgery a few weeks back and it has been a long road of recovery. In my recovery from that, I received 11 blood transfusions”. Now this was possible in Geelong I suppose because of being a regional place, not as big as Melbourne. But she said “The surgeon picked up something that I said and he worked through and he assembled, brought to my room, altogether the 11 people whose blood I had received. They all came into my room and we all had a party together, it was fantastic! And here are all these people I’ve never met before and part of them is what kept me alive and keeps me going”. We understand that from a medical sense and it’s not a perfect parallel, and it’s not unlike what happens not only for the children but all of us within the context of Holy Communion. I’ll never forget in the days of old before I was ordained a priest and I worked at St. Vincent’s hospital over the holidays before I went to the seminary as an orderly, and during that time I gave blood to the blood bank there and a few days later I was wheeling a trolley with a patient on it and that patient was still receiving blood.

They’ve got the little stand up and the blood going into the person. In those days, the blood was in glass bottles, they are in plastic bottles these days. I don’t think they had information they had back in the dark ages, back in the 60s. And I looked up the bottle behind the trolley I was wheeling around. I looked up at the bottle – that’s got my name on the bottle! That was my blood he was getting, so he was awake and conscious and I said “Hey, guess what? You’re getting my blood, so you better get better or you’re going to be in big trouble and so will I”. Anyhow I’m pleased to report, ‘He made a complete recovery’. And whether it was my blood that made all the difference, whether it was the surgeon’s work could have made the difference as well. But I’ve never forgotten that – that was ages ago, but it really was quite a thing. In those days, you’d go to the blood bank and he was the person who was given a new lease on life through what I was able to give him.

It’s what Jesus does for us within the context of ‘The gift of Himself in the Eucharist’ and it’s an amazing thing we’re given, and it’s not all that complicated. The whole sense of being able to take on board the life of another. We can do it through science, we can do it through medicine, but we can do it through the things of the Spirit as well. But he was in the Eucharist, under the appearances of bread and wine, these are the tangible things, visible things by which we are reminded of the

love and presence of God in our life, and along with that, just one little thing that's important to mention, specially to you who are parents, not just parents of the first communicants, just parents many of you, it applies really to all of us I guess, and that is the value of our example of these young children. They need your support, they need your example, because they take a lot more notice of you than you might think. You might think they don't take any notice of me, but they do.

Beautiful scene in a movie that came out many years ago, we couldn't see all of it, some of them are a bit grim, the scenes in this movie, but this is a very gentle beautiful scene of a father and a young son. Of all things, it's out of the movie 'Jaws', made many years ago, very exciting movie, brilliantly made. The dad is the police chief, Chief Brody and he is very troubled and he is very upset because he is under enormous pressure from the town's people, particularly the shopkeepers and so on for closing the beach because of the shark. And he comes home and he is just quite devastated. And his little son gives him comfort and while the scene has hardly any words, in the end, the little bit of dialogue that you may have picked up is so important, he says to his little boy who is imitating everything that he sees 'Give me a kiss'. The boy says "Why?", "Because I need it".

In many ways in Holy Communion Jesus is giving us a kiss, a hug, because we need it. My prayer I'm sure he hears it too. These children receiving their first Holy Communion at this mass and all the others this weekend will receive that comfort, that love and hug and kiss from Jesus as often as they can, because like all of us, they'll need it.

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