

Fr. KEVIN DILLON'S HOMILY DATED 03.11.18

Earlier this week, I found myself quoting the Gospel we just heard, unaware that it would be the Gospel for this Sunday. The background to the conversation was a relatively polite but somewhat strenuous encounter in a lawyer's office, supporting someone who I believed was deserving of that support. I found myself saying we shouldn't be in a lawyer's office. We all believe in Jesus, and Jesus said the greatest Commandment is to "love God and your neighbour as yourself." That's pretty simple. And in saying that, I got a look which basically said "you might think it's simple, but it's not." In other circumstances I could probably be sympathetic to that because they're trying to reduce life and its basic principles to something really straightforward. "Love God, love your neighbour" is not always quite as easy as we think, if only it were so.

But it's still basically, I suppose the phrase today, is the pub test of whether something's right or wrong, whether something's good or bad, whether something's to be pursued or rejected. The pub test is to maybe apply that simple commandment, "love God and your neighbour" and does it tick that box? Particularly "love your neighbour as yourself" which is an important part of the whole thing. But so much of the teachings of Jesus is well, we're going to be judged on how we treat one another. Too often, and too easily, we run off to the office of lawyers to try and sort it out. When maybe the selfless application of that simple commandment might get us a lot further. This weekend, something really important is happening. Last weekend, we had the celebration of the 30 years of the parish, and 25 years of this church, the specific 25th anniversary coming up in about 10 days' time. But we reflected on how the parish was commenced in 1988 formally in January. Just 3 months after a number of people got together and said, "if there's one thing every parish needs - it's not just a parish priest, it may be more important than that. It needs a St. Vincent de Paul's Society conference."

And a few of them got together, and the 30 years of the history of this parish, is 30 years of St. Vincent de Paul work, sacrifice, commitment and dedication. And when we look at those words of Jesus, the fundamentals are "love God, and love your neighbour as yourself." Often enough, the complications of life are well "I've got this and that to do and I've got other responsibilities and so on. I'd love to be

able to look after the poor, I'd like to be able to go to the homeless, I'd love to be able to do something else but I just can't do it." To which the answer is well, you can't do it now, but there are other people who will as part of your community, as part of your parish, and they do. And later on, when things change, maybe you're not as hard pressed, and things are a bit more settled, and maybe you've got a little bit more time and effort to be able to put in, maybe you can do something. And that's what happens over the period of time that we have all of these things.

The whole sense of thinking of St. Vincent de Paul society- not just as a body out there who do good things, but rather a representation of each and every one of us within the context of the parish. To ensure that as a community, the sort of things by which that commandment of "love God and love your neighbour" is put into practice. That's something which is really worthwhile of reflecting upon, and giving whatever support as we are able to. And you can see, obviously as we mentioned, this is a weekend in which we focus on the tremendous work of St. Vincent de Paul. There's a marvellous little phrase that we heard. It goes back - I think I read about 6 different origins of this story. And maybe they're all true, maybe none of them are true but it doesn't really matter. The original story I heard was coming out of WW1, WW2.

That a group of American soldiers, so this is probably an American origin this part of the story. They were going through Italy at the end of WW2 after the cessation of war. And they came across a village which had been very heavily destroyed by bombs and artillery and so on. And they came across a statue of Jesus of the Sacred Heart with arms outstretched in love for us. And it was a very precious statue to the villagers, and they asked for help because they didn't have the skills to put it back together again. Anyhow this is a legend of how much skills the soldiers had but they assembled enough skill to put it back together and the only thing that they couldn't do is find the hands and no one could craft these together. Until one of the soldiers had an idea and whether he put it up in Italian or English I don't know because I didn't make up the story but it's a good story. But the sign went in underneath it; "I have no hands but yours." Now, it's one of those one size fits all stories that can be put into any conflict, anywhere, any nationality, but it doesn't matter. Because it's the essence of the message that makes all the difference.

It goes back to a beautiful prayer of St. Teresa of Avila and put into a poem later on in a similar way. "I have no hands but your hands to do my work today. I have no feet but your feet to lead the better way. I have no tongue but your tongue to tell of how I died. I have no help but your help to bring all people to my side."