

FR. KEVIN DHILLON'S HOMILY DATED 10th NOVEMBER 2018

Quite some years ago, in the late 50s I think, there was an American television compere by the name of Allen Funt and he made his name through a show called *Candid Camera*. By today's standards where we are aware of cameras being everywhere, cctvs here, there and everywhere where every move is being filmed, it is rather quaint if you can look back and see some of the stunts that they have on YouTube just googling *Candid Camera* – one was where they took the motor out of the car and rolled it down the hill to a service station and asked the service station attendant to check the oil and the water and he opens up the bonnet and there is absolutely nothing there whatsoever. All very innocent and perhaps very simple by today's standards but probably a lot more wholesome. But it was a novelty in those days where a camera can be put on someone without them knowing and the story could then be relayed to across the globe through television. Well, that was probably 40-50 years ago.

The story that we got in the gospel today is a *Candid Camera* story. For me, it was one of the best incidents story reported in the gospel. You think about Jesus looking on, He was not actively engaged in this story of this lady who comes along and make this enormously generous contribution to the temple. Jesus doesn't just intervene, He doesn't go up to the woman and say "well done" but the comments are written down and here we are, 2000 years later, hearing this story as an encouragement towards generosity of ourselves. Almost the perfect story that generosity is not what you give, generosity is what you retained for yourself. But the really fascinating part of it, is that "who was that lady?" We know nothing about her and interestingly enough, she in all likelihood went home and she had no idea she had been on the *Candid Camera* of Jesus. That her act of generosity and unselfishness would be reported, written down and commented on into the gospel, into the bible and here are we, 2000 years later and she in all likelihood, knew nothing about it. She would have gone to her grave not knowing one could assume her one act of generosity could be an inspiration to people for decades, centuries, millennia afterwards.

Today, on this Remembrance Day, we sort of go down a similar path of ordinary people who has made great sacrifices. It is exactly 25 years ago today, that the Prime Minister of the day, Paul Keating, gave an address at the National War Memorial of Canberra. It was an extraordinary inspiring address and it is probably as the annuals of Australia is written and reflected upon in particularly on days like today, will be remembered and recounted many times over because he, here at the tomb of The Unknown Soldier is another nameless person, would have no idea that he would be remembered the way he is, maybe in the annuals of the country for who knows how long. The words of Prime Minister Keating really on this Day of Remembrance, like the widow, is worth recounting.

He spoke and said:

“We do not know this Australian's name and we never will. We do not know his rank or his battalion. We do not know where he was born, nor precisely how and when he died. We do not know where in Australia he had made his home or when he left it for the battlefields of Europe. We do not know his age or his circumstances – whether he was from the city or the bush; what occupation he left to become a soldier; what religion, if he had a religion; if he was married or single. We do not know who loved him or whom he loved. If he had children we do not know who they are. His family is lost to us as he was lost to them. We will never know who this Australian was.

Yet he has always been among those whom we have honoured. We know that he was one of the 45,000 Australians who died on the Western Front. One of the 416,000 Australians who volunteered for service in the First World War. One of the 324,000 Australians who served overseas in that war and one of the 60,000 Australians who died on foreign soil. One of the 100,000 Australians who have died in wars the 20th century.

He is all of them. And he is one of us.”

And he goes on to say:

“The Unknown Soldier honours the memory of all those men and women who laid down their lives for Australia.

His tomb is a reminder of what we have lost in war and what we have gained.

We have lost more than 100,000 lives, and with them all their love of this country and all their hope and energy.

We have gained a legend: a story of bravery and sacrifice and, with it, a deeper faith in ourselves and our democracy, and a deeper understanding of what it means to be Australian.

It is not too much to hope, therefore, that this Unknown Australian Soldier might continue to serve his country - he might enshrine a nation's love of peace and remind us that in the sacrifice of the men and women whose names are recorded here there is faith enough for all of us."

And when I realised that Remembrance Day would be on a Sunday, I looked up the gospel that was set down for the 32nd Year B as they called it, I was quite amazed and overcome really over the link between that widow and The Unknown Soldier. The value of the ordinary person whose name is not written down in history about whom we know so little and yet it is his day, her day. As we look at the statistics of World War 1, they are beyond belief. Today, 20 million people killed in World War 1. World War 2 was beyond that – maybe another 20 million. Of the 20 million killed 9 million was military, the other 11 million were civilians. And Australians 60,000 killed and nearly 160,000 wounded. The numbers are just numbers but they are all individual people who have lost their lives or who have given their lives.

Yesterday, we heard the horrendous news of that shooting in California. This (referring to photo on presentation slide) was the person responsible for that and who also died at the end of this terrible gunfire. This photo was taken of him when he was serving in the military. He came home, just like an ordinary fella, like so many others but disturbed – presumably, one can surmised, certainly amongst the many veterans I know, the line between living a normal life and an abnormal life is a very thin and fragile one indeed. We often talked about these incidents and think what is it that often drives someone to that? And then we go back to think of what people have witnessed yesterday in Bourke Street. What is the effect of that one hour or thereabouts or those terrible minutes they were there – on the police officers who

were involved, on the civilians who intervened and helped and what about those who were just walking past and all of these were unfolding and cars blowing up and so on? We are not made of steel. We are human beings and we are very fragile indeed.

On this Remembrance Day, we can remember that the people who went and serve in our name and who would do so into the future are just ordinary people, sons and daughters like us. And who knows what sacrifices they are called upon to make. Like The Unknown Soldier, like the widow, so many of them we don't know who they are. Little later on, just briefly we might see faces of some people out of the conflict of World War 1. Obviously they are all dead now. Some of them never came home. Some of them came home and their lives were never the same. Probably hardly any of them was ever the same. That's why we pray, that's why we remember, that's why we are grateful. Like the widow, we don't know her name, her background, her circumstances but we know she did something that she believed she needed to do – generous. Totally. The Unknown Soldier, again, lack of information but a sense of Prime Minister Keating said at the time, "He is all of them, and he is one of us".

That's why as we recognise, celebrate is not quite the word, recognise the 100 years since the end of the terrible war, we recognise the evil, we recognise the good. We also recognise very much the sacrifice and the aftermath for so many people. To continue even into our own time, we can't explain it all, we never will. That is why our prayers are important – to put it all before the Lord, to pray that somehow the terrible conflict that divides people so deeply, the hatred, the greed especially, that drives so much of this, that they can be if not eliminated as it probably can never will be, but that it be minimised as much as can be. Though it should be recognised the capacity within each and every person - for sacrifice, for unselfishness, for good.

Knowing details, and names, medals and accolades – that is not important. What is important is the value that each of us bring to our lives and like that little widow putting in her two coins, who knows what stories can be told to uphold the value of the gospel, the good in each one of us, into the generations, into the future.

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

Amen.