

Fr KEVIN DILLON'S HOMILY DATED 18.11.18

The end of the world is nigh! I wonder how many times over how many centuries those words have been spoken somewhat grimly and prophetically and sometimes they have cut pretty close. To a degree we have a fixation about the end of the world on so many different levels and sometimes we laugh about it, sometimes we don't laugh about it. If you look through the Peanuts cartoons, which are very profound and have been around for a very long time. Charlie Brown says "The world can't end today because it is already tomorrow in Australia". How comforting is that? Then again there's all sorts of things that might bring about the end of the world. We have different views on what it might be. Now look at this one "The end is near due to global warming", another bloke saying "The end is near due to nuclear winter". Take a pick. And in terms of movies, gosh there's been so many. There's been 'Armageddon', then there's been 'Meteor' and the grimmest was a few years ago '2012' based on the Mayan calendar, the world was due to finish in December 2012, and we made it, we got through.

The guy who made Independence Day made a movie about it and did very well, quite spectacular. But there's something about it, it just gets very very engrossed in all of this and it's a strange sort of a thing. I remember the story years ago, I've never forgotten this. It's sort of funny but it sort of says something about human nature. The story goes that there was a geology or astrophysics or an astronomer presenting a lecture to a class and he says "I have very important news to tell you" and all the students lined up in this big lecture theatre. He says "on my calculations, and I've put years of work into this, the world is going to end in three billion years". And one young fellow up the back stood up and says "What, what did you say?" The professor says "I am going to tell you the world is going to end in three billion years". The young fellow says "Phew, thank goodness. For a moment I thought you said three million years".

In the long run, it's about – well it's something that's summed up in a song that came out years ago – *'Why does the sun go on shining, why does the sea rush to shore, don't they know it's the end of the world – Why? – Cause you don't love me anymore'*. And so in the long run, the real picture is not so much the end of the

world, but like the student and his three million or billion years, it's the end of my world, when is the end of my world and how do I handle this? In the scriptures that we have the end of the church's liturgical year and we had a lot of emphasis on this whole business of the end of the world. And in the long run it's our own circumstances, but you know listening to the reports, terrible reports, and we should keep these poor people in our prayers at the moment. In California, the bush fires over there are just extraordinary and the potential loss of life over there tends to be quite many times more than in our own Black Saturday fires some ten years ago.

But you know there's one image that really is sort of killing, of the end of the world, it's for my anyhow. You might be familiar with it, it was taken in Thailand on December 26, 2004. The people in that picture went for, I think it was a Sunday morning swim. Might have been a Monday, I'm not sure. And the tide went out, then the tsunami struck and nearly 300,000 people lost their lives. But they're all individuals and you look at those people, just out for a Sunday morning dip and in a moment caught up in this extraordinary catastrophe, which was not the end of the world, but almost certainly the end of their world. And that's within our own time, as is Black Saturday, as are all these terrible catastrophic bushfires in the US at the moment. And in so many other places, we read and hear of these things. So how do we handle all that? Maybe we handle it like the old monk who was in the monastery and a television crew was in filming the monks and what they were doing – getting up at 4 o'clock in the morning and what they ate and how they prayed and whatever.

The interviewer, cameraman is walking along the corridor. So he sees this is old monk, he's quite a senior monk who's down on his hands and knees with a scrubbing brush on the timber floor and he's scrubbing away. And he said "Brother, how long have you been here?" He says "Well I've been in the monastery for 55 years this year. And he says "Well that's fantastic, you've spent all your life serving God and here you are scrubbing the floor. Tell me Brother, what would you do if you knew you had one hour to live?" The old brother thought for just a couple of seconds and he said "I'd just keep scrubbing the floor". What he meant was that's what he believed in the depths of his heart was what his role, his mission was, on that day, at that time, what God wanted him to do? What would we do if we knew that the end

of the world was nigh? What would we do? It's an amazing question. The whole end of the world thing does have a value in it.

We might say, Ah we've been through the 2012 bit and this, that and the other. The reality is as we see in that terrible picture of the Boxing day tsunami, that somewhat depressing picture in a way, but it is chilling and telling in the same way. It's a reality check in terms of keeping life in perspective because so many of the things we just take for granted can change in a moment and it's a good thing to have a reality check, to be grounded, to think about, well, yeah, interesting question – if I had an hour to live, what would I most want to do. Think back to 2001 to the passengers on the United Airlines flight 93. I only mention this, there's plenty of examples, but this is a well-known one, who had the capacity on what they knew was a doomed flight, to call their families, to tell them how much they loved them; to tell them maybe they were sorry for things that they have messed up because they knew that they had only may be an hour to live and indeed that's all they did have.

Some of those calls have been recorded. It makes for very serious listening, on the net if you want to listen to them. But it's a fascinating question. It's not so much the end of the world, it's the end of our world. Does that mean we're morbid about it? No it doesn't. Doesn't mean we got to go around and say "Ooh, the end of the world". No. It means that we keep life in perspective, but may be if we had an hour to live, there may be a few calls we would make and it might be just like that, to tell someone we love them. It might be to pray for God's forgiveness for things that we've carried all our life and never wanted to own up to. It might be to rebuild a friendship that somehow went off the rails and we've always regretted it and we've got just one hour to fix that up because the end of our world is coming soon. That's not morbidity, that's a reality check because so often the things that we mess up, the things that we regret, the things we would dearly love to fix if we knew we only had one hour to go.

Well why do we have to wait until we only have one hour, why not just do it, today, tomorrow, this week. If it can be done, to just do it because it's worth doing and it keeps our life in perspective. So the end of the world is nigh is not a matter of waiting for the next earthquake or the tsunami or the next plane we get on to crash into the ground, the end of the world is something which says, "Hey this life that we live, and this life is limited" and we often get upset and we often spit the dummy

and we often get angry and we often get hurt about things or with people when it really doesn't matter and maybe within the context of the limit of life, is what the end of the world is really all about- that limited nature of life. All of those things can be put into perspective. So in this last week of the church's year before we move into next week, the feast of Christ the king and then advent, here are some good things to think about. Please God, we do have more than an hour to go and the world is not going to end on December the 10th 2018 or whatever date it was supposed to be six years ago.

But there's a value for us in terms of thinking of the limited nature of our life and maybe that we give too much importance to things which in the long run don't really matter.