

## **Fr KEVIN DILLONS HOMILY DATED 19.01.19**

Every day we hear and read about extraordinary stories and some very ordinary stories. One that's maybe both together that captured a lot of attention in the last months or so, I think was just during November, was the operation, the surgery that successfully separated the little twins from Bhutan. A couple of pictures (on screen), one before separation and here's one after, at the airport. You've just got to look at the smile on their mum's face to look at the fact that they came through it, that they are able to live, well, as much as possible I guess, a normal life. One can only wonder what the psychological side of all this is, but they're so small, hopefully they'll be able to adjust to their separated life from their little twin sisters. I said it's an ordinary story and an extraordinary story. Its extraordinariness, I guess is just the miracle of surgery, of what can be done medically these days, and that from the other side of the world and the very small country, from the population of less than a million that these two little children have been singled out and through the marvelous work of the Children First Foundation here in Victoria, founded, I guess maybe, twenty or twenty-five years ago by an unbelievable lady by the name of Moira Kelly.

She looks out for these circumstances for little kids that need the surgery that could never be provided in their own country and persuades, people, twists people's arms, and gets donations as all sorts of amazing things to be able to make it happen. That's extraordinary. It's also, though, very ordinary, in so far that those two very little kids, are just two of maybe who knows how many children, how many people in the world that need the miracle of surgery and modern medicine. Some will get it and some won't, because that's just the way things are and the way it worked out that somehow these children were brought to the attention of the Children First Foundation, and one thing lead to the next, and here they are with this wonderful surgery that will make such an enormous difference to them for who knows, seven, eight, nine decades from here on in.

But it's the ordinariness though, which is so important because, it's a bit like the old story that's been told so many times: this little kid throwing the fish back in the sea that are being washed up on the shore and one says, 'Why are you doing that because as many fish as you throw in, there'll be others washed out tomorrow', and so on. 'What

difference will it make?’ And he says as he throws one in and says, “Well, it’ll make a difference to this one.” And, in that simple story, it’s been told many, many times, and for good reason, it’s such a good story. In a simple sort of thing, it does say that those little things of life mean so much. And that’s true in our own lives. It’s sometimes, it’s not the big Christmas parties or the major birthdays or the whatever, it’s the little acts of kindness, of care, the fact that maybe we’re struggling a bit, we’re down, and somebody rings us up, and we say “What’d you ring for?”, “Nah, just rang up to say good day”, “Just rang up because I think you’re a worthwhile person”.

They mightn’t say that in those words, but that’s what they mean. ‘Or rang up cos I’m worried about you. You’ve just been looking a bit down and miserable and just wanted to cheer you up,’ or whatever. Those small acts of kindness, and there’s been TV shows made on that, random acts of kindness and that sort of thing, they’re fantastic because they show that in the small ways in which we interact with one another there is a very magnificent and very profound sense of meaning in life. We might have our big events and our big days and big celebrations, but the little things mean so much.

I guess when we look at the deeds of Jesus, of God made man, when we look down and we say, “Well what are the really important things that Jesus did?” and probably at the top of the list, you’d say well he died, and he rose again because everything else gets meaning from that. Okay, we’ll put that at the top.

What else? Well, he fed the five thousand and he cured the lepers and he made the blind see and dumb talk and he raised life; hey, Lazarus and the dead, better not forget that! And the son of the widow of Nain, they’re really terrific. And then as we go down the list of different things and he taught people with great authority and so on, and then we might come up, with the gospel today, way down the list – he turned water into wine. Now on the one hand, we might say, “Well how good is that? Wish I could do that,” some people would say. “Wouldn’t that be terrific?” But in reality, in terms of the need that met, some people had died, some people had terrible crippling or life-threatening illnesses. Some people were spiritually dead, and Jesus brought them back to life. Here, what are we talking about here? We’re talking about a young couple who, if this didn’t happen, were going to be a bit embarrassed, cause the wine ran out. So where does that rate on a scale of one to ten of real human need? Probably about a three.

Being raised from the dead, being given sight back and so on, well that's an eight or a nine or a ten. But an embarrassment, at a wedding reception for goodness sake? How big a deal is that? And yet, that was the need that Jesus addressed in order to move into public ministry. The very first time that he was prepared to have a tension come to him in terms of what he could do, and he used extraordinary, divine given power in order to be able to just help people, in a small way. He didn't say "Righto, I'm going to let you win," - how much was it that lady won the other night? A hundred million or some extraordinary amount. Imagine all the letters she's getting. All the begging letters. But it wasn't a huge thing. Just a little thing. It was quaint in its own way.

I mean, we've had so many jokes over the years about turning water into wine. You know, what was the old one about the old Irish priest: driving along and gets pulled over by the breath tester police and they see his bottle holder in the car and they say, "What's that Father?" and he says "Oh, it's just colored water," and they say "Oh is it really?" and they pick it up and they sniff it and he has a little bit of a sip and he says, "Well actually Father, it's now wine." "Glory be to God, he's done it again!" You must have heard that. That's as old as the hills, that one, and lots of different versions about it. Yeah, it's that sort of miracle, it's so earthy, it's so normal, that we have jokes about it. But that's terrific in its own way because it says those little things in life worthy of being helped. Talking before mass about saying a prayer for a parking space. There were two reasons why you do that; one, is that it's an act of faith, and second, cause it works. 'Hail Mary full of grace, find for me a parking space', and well it does, it works. Every time?

Well, maybe not every time, but it's there, nonetheless. What is it though, it is an act of faith. It's saying, "Lord, you're in charge, I know. And all sorts of things can happen, and I just want to tell you that I know that, and I acknowledge that, and if you want me to find a parking space and get to the movies on time or to get to my medical appointment on time, or whatever, it'll happen". And that sense of literally knowing our place is important. But it's those little needs that we have where people say well, "what happens about those people who during a tight last quarter will pray for their footy team to win? What about the person next door who barracks for the other team, and their walking up and down the hallway in front of their TV with their rosary beads? How do you figure

that out?" Well, we're not going to figure it out, but it doesn't mean it's going to be a draw or whatever, but it does mean those little things that we pray about, we pray for someone who's sick. We pray for someone who's having surgery.

Is that going to make a difference? Too right it will, because it's an expression of our humanity before divinity, and it is in that divinity of God expressed in Jesus, that our whole faith is there. So, those little human things, whether it's embarrassment at a wedding reception, things can and do go wrong at a wedding receptions, I could keep you here all day for stories about that, but the little things that mean so much, the things that you and I can do every day, and do do, it's what makes the world go round. Within our own life, sure, if you look at our lives, we'll have a few big-ticket items. Not just celebrations and things, but things that we've achieved, things that we've done which we know really made a difference, but there are probably so many other things about which we have no idea what may be a kindly gesture, a small gift, an encouraging word, could have made all the difference.

Maybe we find out about it years down the track, but they're the things that the Lord says to us, "Hey, if I can turn water into wine at a wedding reception, you can help each other too." So, let's not put down those little things, those little needs. We mightn't be able to turn the water into wine, but we can listen, we can mow someone's lawn, we can offer to do the shopping, we can, as one lady who I was speaking to a couple of weeks ago, she's having radiotherapy, she lives quite some distance from the hospital and a wonderful neighbor who she never knew all that well who said, "Oh I can take you in, every day for twenty-five days, a fifty kilometer round trip," and she's doing it. That's not turning water into wine, it's even better, and that's within our capacity to do that. Jesus knew exactly what he was doing when he chose to do this small act of kindness.

Spectacular? Sure.

And even with that little note at the end to say, 'hey, this is the good stuff, where have you been hiding this?' what a great little note it is on the end of it that the wine was there was better than the real stuff that they'd had before. So it's a great little note that comes at the end of this story, but it's not just a curiosity, it's a story with a real message for us to try and go and do likewise, not by turning water into wine, but by turning someone's life a little better than what it's been.