

## Fr KEVIN DILLON'S HOMILY DATED 17.02.19

As I imagine, a number of you have probably figured out by now, I am a bit of a fan of country music. Now that alienates me probably from a portion of the parish and population and whatever and usually when you say to people “Why are you so crooked on country music?” They’ll say “It’s always so sad”. What was the old story in the days we had records. You play the country record backward, you get your dog back and your wife back – you play it backwards. Well, it’s probably fair comment. I was with a friend the other day and for whatever reason, we brought up a song, well it wasn’t really a song, it was a monologue from way back. It was the most miserable song you’ve ever heard. Just to boost you up, I am going to read it to you. It’s called – some of you are old enough to remember –

### **Life gets tee-jus, don’t it?**

*The sun comes up and the sun goes down  
Hands on the clock they just keep going around  
I just get up and it’s time to lay down  
Life gets tee jus, don’t it?  
My shoe’s untied but I don’t care  
I ain’t really figuring going nowhere  
I just have to wash and comb my hair  
And that’s just wasted effort  
The water in the well is getting lower and lower  
Can’t take a bath for six months more  
But I’ve heard it said and it’s probably true  
That too much bathing will weaken you  
I open the door and the flies swarm in  
I shut the door and I’m sweating again  
I move too fast and I crack my shin  
Just one darned thing after another  
The old brown mule he must be sick  
Jabbed him with the rump, in the rump with a stick  
He humped his back but he didn’t kick  
Something cock-eyed somewhere  
Mouse chewin’ on the pantry door*

*Fool's been at it for a month or more  
When he gets through, he's sure going to be sore  
There ain't a darn thing in there  
The cow's gone dry and the hens won't lay  
Fish goodbyed last Saturday  
Troubles pile up day by day  
And now I'm getting dandruff  
Grief and misery, pains and woes,  
Debts and taxes and so it goes  
Now it seems I'm getting a cold in the nose  
Life gets tasteless, don't it?*

Now if you felt bad before I read that, you probably feel terrific now, because it's a bit of a lift! That's the way life goes in the sense that it's the ups and downs in life and Jesus refers to that in the gospel today. He recognises something that is really very true. It's the whole issue of what does something cost and what's its value. The two aren't necessary exactly the same. Yesterday I attended a ceremony at Mazenod College. It was very impressive, it was last year's Year 12. I couldn't believe they do it every year, they've been doing it for 10 years or more of all the students and there were a lot of them who had scored 90%+ in their ATAR score and it was nearly 40 of them I think and it was very impressive. But all of those students now moved on to university, most of them, all of them would've said "Well, I had to put a lot of things aside last year, I had to really apply myself, I had to work may be like I've never worked before. But somehow or the other when I got that score, and I was able to get into the course that I want and so on, it's worth it.

The cost was high but the value of what's been achieved has been significant. Every day we have to balance the value and the cost of so many things and these beatitudes, it's sort of interesting. It's not exactly like the beatitudes that we're used to which were in St. Matthew's gospel. They were from the sermon on the mount – Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven, etc. This one's a little different, they look the same but then they're balanced by Jesus saying, "Just be careful if things are going well and don't get carried away. Alas for you it might change, worse still, it will change". This is the sermon not on the mount but the sermon on the plain. The sermon on the mount from Jesus was meant to lift is up.

The sermon on the plain was not meant to push us down, it was meant to keep us balanced. It's the level playing field as we talk about.

So Jesus says, "Things are tough, things are crook, things are sad, you're worried and you're tired and you're angry; things are falling apart, hang in because things can and will improve. Don't give up". But he also says this balance bit, "Well if everything's going well, for goodness sake, don't get carried away. Because that can change too and it can change markedly". Jesus often spoke about and warned us against complacency – just saying 'Everything's terrific' and it's not always terrific. Sure, today is a beautiful day, but weather can change. Weather is a great reminder to us of how easily things can change and so we could look at a day like today and go home and say, "Oh it's fantastic, it's going to be the same tomorrow, so we'll get rid of all our umbrellas and we'll get rid of our gumboots and we'll get rid of our overcoats because it's always going to be sunny and warm and 24 every day. Oh yeah? That's not the way it goes.

We look in the public arena and if we've ever had some reminders, that's been in the last few years of people who, and it's sad in so many ways, who have risen to the top of their profession, in any number of different ways, may be earned a lot of money, may be earned some awards and public recognition and accolades, and then somehow or other it all goes pear shaped and it all falls apart. Now sometimes we look at that and may be they've brought it on themselves, may be they have, but it's a great leveller. That's a sermon on the plain not to get too carried away with what we're doing. Of all of the things that can happen in our life, the thing that really makes a difference to us and most of us have probably been down this track, but not all. But the thing that makes all the difference is sickness, that of ourselves and that of others. Because when we're sick they often say "You go to hospital, they leave you at admissions at the door" – that's true enough too.

But so many other things on which we put emphasis, whether it's the health of others that we love and we're worried about them or whether it's ourselves, and we're worried about our own health, cause may be something's happening within this body of ours and we're not quite sure where it's going, everything sort of gets put aside, it's not nearly as important as we think it is. I read a little piece from a guy in the U.S. who posted this on the net and I copied it down. He's got an unusual name – Talbert McGuinness – now I have no idea who he is, but he put this on the net and he knows what he is talking about. He says nothing in this life is free regardless of the

songwriter's efforts. I suppose he meant the best things in life are free – not it's not – everything has a price – good, bad and ugly. Some of the best things cost no more than a moment with a kind word, while many of the ugliest that cost lives are very expensive.

The price paid for a word, action or a possession can be exorbitant or it can be miniscule, its value is an entirely different story. So someone can just ring us up and say 'Just thinking of you', 'Good on you for what you did here' and 'Glad you did that' and you know 'Go well' and we put the phone down and we feel terrific. Whole thing took 20 seconds, cost nothing, literally nothing, and yet the value of that is just so good to give us a lift. In the conclusion he says, "As a man married for 54 years to the same woman, I would give, do or pay whatever it would take to make her happy". How do you like that? I'll read it again - As a man married for 54 years to the same woman, he says, I would give, do or pay whatever it would take to make her happy. Unfortunately, the health problems are beyond any of my abilities to solve. All I can do is provide a daily life of love and caring to support her. Neither of these are high expense items, although the value is according to her, immeasurable.

Now what Jesus does today is, He challenges us as he often does with the sermon not on the mount but on the plain, the level playing field of keeping us balanced, keeping us not getting ahead of ourselves, not thinking we've got it all sewn up, but also recognising – when the going isn't too good, that even the small things make all the difference – let's pray for that balance.

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