

## **Fr. KEVIN DILLON'S HOMILY DATED - 03.03.2019**

I neglected at the beginning of mass to welcome our extended congregation, you can't see them but they can hear us on Light FM. And that mass goes to a lot of people on Sunday morning, and it's a great opportunity to bring the mass into people's homes and on the road and whatever. I was conscious, even at the very beginning of the week that it's always a bit tricky, given that we had set this Sunday aside as part 2 of our Thanksgiving Program, and thought well how does that work with regard to people in other places, parishes and even other churches who are not going through a Thanksgiving Program. But in fact, I suppose some of the things which hopefully I will mention as well as I can, really apply to anyone, anywhere. So I hope our extended congregation can pick up something along the way.

We all belong somewhere, we all belong in a family, we all belong in a community, and let's face it our community is very wounded. Not just Rowville, but our whole Church. And there's more to come, and it's sadly been familiar territory in the sense that I think it's about 40 years since priests had to find words on weekends to address all sorts of areas of revelation and findings that were so abhorrent and so challenging. It's very important of course, as the Archbishop says in his letter and as I try to say in my few words in the bulletin, we've got to recognise there's still things to be determined within the context of our own judicial system and that's appropriate and proper. But we all struggle for words and more importantly we all struggle for a sense of balance in trying to put things together. It occurred to me talking to someone yesterday that it's probably better to talk not so much about what we think, but about how we feel. Just the sort of body blow that people feel within the context of family, church family. We have to deal with these sorts of things irrespective of points of view are not so important. It's sad, it's difficult, and lots of people have hurt, not just in this case. But there's been enormous hurt in the church that we know of and have identified for decades.

As well as the Archbishop's letter and the bulletin this week, and this is not a self-indulgent thing. But for those who want it, I've got some copies in the sacristy of a little piece I wrote for the bulletin 23 years ago about this same issue, and I could've written it yesterday. And that's sad because we haven't moved on. We haven't recognised that those who are most wounded are most in need of our care.

And that's the fundamental background of all of this, that we need to take on board and to recognise that if it was true 23 years ago, it's true in 2019 as well. What is tragic is that we haven't learnt that fundamental issue of care for those innocent people who have suffered so much. So it's within the context of the total picture of the many decades that we need to examine everything that's to the forefront of this moment. To try and then move on, as we must, "righto, now we're going to talk about financial support of the parish." Give us a break- you're saying that, and so am I. But in a converse sort of a way, maybe that is important. Because it separates the sense of however we might, in one way or another, see the faults of individuals, or the institution, or the legal system, or whatever, all of which have issues.

Ultimately, it boils down to ourselves, our own community and our own family, and what we make of our church. Sure, we're part of the bigger picture, and that's important. But it's the local picture, for us here at Rowville, for others who are listening to this on radio to wherever you live, who you're part of and what church is important to you. Ultimately, it's the sense of faith. It's the person of Jesus Christ in our life. We're not isolated in that we come together as we do here. As we do each week, we come together to support each other, in prayer and in faith, in our own weaknesses. The Gospel talking about don't go having a go at everybody else, what about the splinter in your own eye. So all of these things we try and juggle and somehow try and put together. And within it all is the sense that we come along to this place, together. This is our meeting place, this is our gathering place, our place of prayer. And it's not just a building, it's a community. And it's sustaining that community in all of the things that's so important.

Last week mention was made by our speakers, I think most of them talked about 2 things in terms of parish: property and people. Property's easier to talk about because you can see it, and you can use it. And there are things happening, we've got a parish centre which is now, at long last, getting going and it's really moving ahead very quickly at the moment. And that will be fantastic to help to bring us together within our own community, and in large degree hopefully to extend out to the wider community of which we are a part. So whether it's the office, or the hall that can be used for so many things within just a few metres of this church, or whether it's the theatre that can bring together all sorts of different groups. Had

a theatre once would you believe, and it's still going, where they have an Elvis group. Whole bunch of people who love Elvis Presley and come together about 6-8 times a year and play all his concerts. And they're people not just from the parish but all over. They're the sort of things that we can do, and we can provide. So that's going to be terrific and we'll be able to see that happen.

And then in terms of the other key areas of property is what we've got here. The church itself. Beautiful church, bequeathed to us by those who began the parish probably 25 years down the track. Needing a bit of a cut and polish in a few areas and we're hoping to try and do that. Thank goodness at the moment it's a little cooler than it might be without the addition of some air conditioners a couple of months back. So they're the things that we can see, and they're the things to which we contribute, as best we can to keep the show on the road. Just as important, perhaps more important arguable, is the people. That's not as obvious. Because often people come in contact with a parish community within the context of worship on a weekend or a weekday, all of which are important. But at peak times of their life, when a new baby arrives, when someone is sick, when someone has died, and they need not only a building- they need a sense of community, a sense of hope, a sense of purpose, a sense of understanding.

All of these things are provided in and through the community that we call a parish. And the basics that we know- having the lights on, the air conditioners running, and someone that prepares the words of the hymn on the screen. All of those things, they don't just occur. They happen because people produce them. The phone has rung, someone is sick, and they need someone to bring Holy Communion as I had during the week, one day I had 2 calls to local hospitals. And that happens because thank goodness, there's someone there to answer the phone. They're little things, but jeez they make a difference when they're not there or they're not up to speed. And that's why the people part of things is so important. And even for those many people who may not be here at the weekend, the parish community is still there and it's a bit like the spare tyre in the boot of the car. You hope that you don't have to use it, but you make sure that they're pumped up to ensure you can. Which can remind you when you're next in the service station, check the tire pressure in your spare tire just in case you use it.

So all of that is important, and it's that to which we ask that in these trouble and challenging times, that you will still see value in your faith. This is about Jesus in your life, and in the lives of those around you. And this is the way in which we keep that message, in troubled times and in good times, and please God good times will come eventually, we're not in the middle of those eventually. But it's the message of Jesus, and His call to love one another as He has loved us, which is the core of what we're about. And to try and keep that message going, and to try and support each other, to recognise that even the little can mean a lot, specifically even a couple of dollars. I've mentioned the word dollar; I didn't want to. If everyone's who's in the thanksgiving program can manage a couple of dollars additional per week, that would pay the loan on the parish centre. Now will we get there, I don't know. How many people will throw their hands up and say look, I'm over it, I'm out of here.

And I can understand it, I'm sure many of you could too. Now maybe that's the way you're feeling. I can tell you sometimes I do too. But we hang in because it's about Jesus himself, it's about supporting people that need our support, including very much those people who have been damaged within the context of our church by trusted people.

***Note: Due to technical problems, we have been unfortunately unable to load up the last 3 minutes of this Homily. We do apologize for the inconvenience.***