

FR. KEVIN DHILLON'S HOMILY DATED 10th MARCH 2019

I guess Lent is a time of repentance and the way we express repentance in the church is through confession. So, I'll make a small confession to you. With at least 20 years of homilies stored on my computer that I confess that occasionally I go back and have a look – not to repeat, I have never been guilty of repeating, but sometimes to give you a bit of a spark or an angle to take.

Given the week and the fortnight it has been, I wasn't feeling too uplifted, so I scrolled back and I found that three years ago, I mentioned a movie called "Spotlight" which won the Oscar that year for Best Picture of the Year and fully deserved it. If you haven't seen it, I think it's on the net and if you haven't seen it, you should. It goes back to events in 2002. That is seventeen years ago where the staff of the newspaper The Boston Globe who uncovered decades of abuse of children within the church and investigated it thoroughly, fairly and published it to great wringing of hands, shame and apologies. It was a lesson that should have gone across the world, should have been known years before and here we are, seventeen years on, from those revelations of 2002 depicted in Spotlight, the movie and how far have we progressed?

Well, now, we haven't progressed at all. And as we slipped back further, the stories we have, as I was talking to a parishioner from here recently, just this week. They were saying to me that a member of their family, a young in-law, in their 30s and when they started talking about THE topic, and he said "I wouldn't let any of my children be in the presence of a Catholic priest."

I can understand that. It doesn't make me feel too good but that is the reality. That's seventeen years on from The Boston Globe and Spotlight. And it is further on from any number of things which would have been known all along the way and we are crushed. Not just priests, or people in religion but you, you are crushed. You have to deal with this within your family. People are saying to you, "Why in the world are you going (to church)? Why in the world do you want your grandchildren baptised and so on?" And so it goes on and on and on.

In a strange sort of a way, we have got a little of a hint about this. I sat down at about a quarter to one in the morning because I have written the front page of what you see in the bulletin this week. It was okay, it wasn't anything I didn't want to say but I thought it didn't get to the real issue. I've spoken about what the real issue is. The real issue is, "how in the world did it get to this?"

Maybe there are two words. The two words that are pretty well heard in the gospel and the examples of them just today. You have just heard them. They are in the seven deadly sins. People often have debates on what is the deadliest of the seven deadly sins. And most people immediately say "oh, Lust!" But in fact, and I take the wisdom of a fellow called John Burns who made an entry on the breakfast show and they were talking about this few years back "What is the deadliest of the seven deadly sins?" And he said, pretty accurately – "Greed". Alongside it and very much linked to it, is the quest for 'Power'. And those things are in the gospel today.

Jesus is tempted or the temptation is put before him in terms of borderly greed, hunger but also he was taken up and given a 'google earth' type vision of the earth and he's told this "you can have all this if you worship Satan". But of course he was talking to the wrong fellow. He was talking to Jesus – who won't have a bar of it of course. But, ultimately so much of what we look at within the context of the appalling drama we are going through in the church and have gone through for a long time but we have let slipped into the background. No, I shouldn't say 'we', because you haven't but others have.

The things that should have been addressed ages ago still are to be addressed. I've got a text just the other day, it was from someone who was brutally assaulted as a thirteen year old, and it has affected him and he's in his fifties and he lives interstate. But he sent me a photo of his grandson. He said "good looking kid, isn't he? Takes after his grandfather." Trouble is, he's never seen him. A friend of a friend of a friend, got the photo of Facebook for him. With his son in-law, whom he has met, but he was never able to walk his daughter down the aisle because within the context of how the brutality of what he has suffered in school had affected his life in the critical first ten, fifteen years of his marriage, it all fell apart, they disappeared and they had nothing to do with him ever since to this very day. And he's a fine man and he's a friend of mine and I'm proud to call him my friend but that is just one of thousands

of stories. And I looked at that picture – it is on my phone at the moment, and here, how did he managed that?

There is all sorts of situations that can occur within anyone's life whereby marriage has fallen apart, relationships have broken and of course, doesn't have to be this. But the point is, there are people specifically responsible for this.

And there are people whose responsibilities is to repair the damage as much as possibly can be repaired. And what it has been? It has been about greed and power.

When you think of it, in what has been Wednesday week, I think it's the 21st, the deanery is putting an evening on how to cope with domestic violence. Domestic violence is all about power. And so many of the other issues, in our lives today that we look at, they are all about power. That doesn't have to be in the context of governance, it can be within the framework of individual homes. We hear so much of the word "bullying". Now it can be a sort of one size fits all thing that people pull out, what is "bullying"? Bullying is all about power. Who has a say, who doesn't or whatever. And so it goes on. Even in sporting clubs and so on, "win at all costs, you have to crush the opponent to the ground, and he gets a broken jaw or she gets a broken jaw. Doesn't matter, win at all costs." That's where we are within society. And the church should be showing a different way, showing the way of Jesus. But we have failed, and we have failed miserably.

I told you that you wouldn't leave here today feeling good. But it is the truth and I bleed for you. For goodness sake, don't bleed for me when I tell you a few stories, but I bleed for you because you are handling it in the work place, you are handling it in social groups, well – most of the times I spent, is with wonderful people like you who have faith and keep the faith. You got to go out here, there and everywhere with people who might say to you tomorrow, "What did you do on the weekend?" Did you say "I went to mass at St Simon's" or do you even go down that track unless you really have to.

So, GREED and POWER is there within individual lives, but it can sure be there within institutions and it can and it is. And ultimately, when we go down that track, as decisions have been made, it hasn't been about poor, belligerent children, like

my mate who sent me the photo of his grandson, it hasn't been about putting his life back together, it is about hanging on to what we've got. Well, what we've got is hardly worth hanging on to but at least, it's got integrity.

So, we are going down this path of Lent. And it is going to Lent, I suggest like no other and we better get ready for it. It won't finish at this step. I guess it would be a rather muted this step, be a rather muted year and yet, somehow or rather, the grace of God is still there, still there in your life, please God, in mine. We'll find a sense of direction, a sense of hope, but maybe we will look across the season of Lent, we'll look at Jesus on the cross in a way, we have never looked before. And maybe the sense of direction in this step, it will be muted but it will still be there.

Let us pray for God's guidance, help and direction in our own lives as we wrestle with these issues. You and I can do nothing in terms of the bigger picture because you have no say in it, and neither have I, but you can look after your own life, you can work and pray to be a person where greed and the quest for power rate as minimally as possible. And maybe we might, eventually, over decades, maybe over centuries, able to give the gospel of Jesus a chance to live again.

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