

Fr Kevin Dillon - HOMILY DATED 30.06.2019

Life, I imagine is a series of joining dots, different things happen to join us to something else. I read something a few days ago about a paralympian that reminded me about a book I had read some years ago. While I don't remember some details about it, it was a biography about George Mallory.

George Mallory was a British mountaineer who got through the challenges of World War 1 serving in France. He was a very courageous mountaineer, and he was one of the first people to attempt to scale Mount Everest. Anthony Irvine was another who was with him. They were both lost and never found. Anthony Irvin's body has still not been found. No-one knows what happened – whether they got to the top and fell on the way down, or they never got to the top.

George Mallory's body was found in 1999. So, for seventy-five years his body remained on Everest. It was so cold that it was basically intact when they found him. 1924, of course, was about 30-31 years before Edmond Hillary conquered Everest. I thought about George Mallory and that story of courage and perseverance of people undertaking the conquest of Everest when no-one had done it before because I came across this story about a young woman whose first name was Mallory.

She is a paralympian. She was a promising swimmer at the age of about sixteen or seventeen. She received an epidural injection for some back pain and came out paralysed and was unable to use her legs at all. But within 3 months she had herself back in the pool and within a couple of years at the 2012 Paralympics she won a couple of gold medals and then a few more in 2016.

So, the story is amazing. A young woman who has this kind of courage over adversity. She got married and through sheer tenacity was able to allow her father to walk her down the aisle and her new husband to walk her back, even though she is confined to a wheelchair for most of her life.

A bit closer to home. Just last year I attended a talk at the local Rotary club by a footballer, a coach now. His name is Beau Vernon. In 2012 he was a star player for Leongatha, and their captain. As a result of an on-field collision he became a quadriplegic but that was not to deter him at all because after he made some sort of recovery, he became their coach.

He coached Leongatha for three years from a wheelchair to three successive Grand Finals. The first year (2016) he lost by six points, he lost by one point the next year and then won by one point in 2018. Extraordinary story. He spoke last year at a breakfast club put on by the Rotary Club here

in Rowville. There are many of these stories – not just related to physical injuries or things to be conquered like Mt Everest and so on, but they are part of the challenge of life for us all. Where these stories are great is that they remind you and me of the capacity of the human spirit to do great things, to set a goal and to get on with it.

There is one word that made me think of this this week. A word in the Gospel. The Gospel tells us that this trip that Jesus made to Jerusalem was going to be one in which he knew things were going to go very badly, indeed. But there is one word – Jesus **'resolutely'** took the road to Jerusalem. What a great word that is. The noun is 'resolve'. A sense of resolve that Jesus had. He knew what he was going to, he knew what he had to do, and he set out to do it. Nothing was going to deter him.

Later on in the Gospel as he meets these different people along the way and they say, 'Yeah, I'll come and follow you, but I've got to do this or that.' Jesus says, 'That's not the way you're going to get there. The way you're going to get there is the way of resolve, of determination, of not putting it off because once you do one thing you might end up doing another.'

It sounds a bit rough, of course, 'Let me go and bury my father first.' We think that the funeral is tomorrow but it was just an expression to say, Well, I'm sort of home and I'm the next in line and so on – all of which was quite valid in its own way, but the message that we get in the Gospel is one of resolve, of recognising the sense of purpose of not letting other things distract us, or even crush us.

Just about everyone of us here today would have had times where we felt crushed, where you feel that you just can't do this anymore. You don't have to be old and wrinkly for this to have happened. Sometimes for young people, school and studies can go down a path where we get demoralised. Of course, there may be times when you get good advice and you don't necessarily persevere, but if you really want something, Jesus says you get in and you make it work.

In the second reading that we heard. When Christ freed us, he meant us to remain free, Paul writes to the Galatians. 'Stand firm therefore and do not submit to the yoke of slavery.' It's real three-quarter time stuff. It's good because we need that. I saw a little talk a while back on You-tube. It was Arnold Schwarzenegger. It was his talk for success. The very first thing he says is that if you want success you have to have a goal. When he was training to be Mr Universe, the resolve he had was absolutely focussed and because of that he became Mr Universe at age twenty and this led into a movie career, political career, and so on. It's a great talk about success.

So easily we can be deterred from this path through being crushed, or being sad, through not having the resolve we need. Schwarzenegger spoke about being a good friend of Mohammed Ali, and he asked, 'How many push ups do you do?' Ali said that he didn't know, that he only started counting 'when it hurts'. This is very profound when you think about it. These are the little phrases we have to keep us going. They work and they are good.

Jesus had that to. That's what that word in the Gospel is. He took that road to Jerusalem with 'resolve/ resolutely'. He knew what was going to happen. He knew that he wasn't coming back – at least not in the human sense. This was where he was going to die. This was his whole mission in life – not just to die – but to redeem. He knew what he had to do, and he set out and he said, 'I'm going to do this'. And he said to those who follow him, 'You've got to do the same. Have a sense of resolve in following me. Don't go zigzagging or turning around and going back or having a rest by the way. No! You have a goal to achieve and you do it.' How right he was. He did it himself and other great people are doing it all the time.

All those people who had a goal and did everything they could to reach it. They are our inspiration in every aspect of our life, but most of all our inspiration is Jesus himself. Every time we look at the crucifix, we see a man of resolve who had a goal, who had a purpose, who knew what it was. He set out and he did it. Each one of us are the beneficiaries in ways we cannot even fully comprehend of that goal and that accomplishment.