

## FR. KEVIN DILLON'S HOMILY DATED 14 JULY 2019

Most of us will have stories of where were you and do you remember when this happened and that happened. A lot of attention at the moment of course on the Moon Landing of July 19<sup>th</sup> 1969, nearly sixty years since that occurred. Way we watched it and what we thought and so on.

Couple of weeks ago, I was reminded of something that was almost in that category. It took something that maybe nudge me a bit. I was at a cemetery and I look at the plaque of a grave adjoining the one in which I was doing the burial. And the name resonated with me quite strongly. The man's name was Brendan Keilar. He was a solicitor. Just over twelve years ago, he was going to work at 8am and he went to assist a young woman who being savagely beaten by a fella who turned out to be her ex-boyfriend. He was followed a few yards behind by a Dutch tourist, a backpacker only 25 years of age. They both intervened. Brendan Keilar was shot dead at the corner of Flinders Lane and Williams St in the Melbourne CBD. Paul de Waard, the Dutch backpacker, was also shot as did the woman, the girlfriend or ex-girlfriend was shot as well.

Another woman who had seen what was happening, ran to the scene, was confronted by the gunman, pointed his gun at her, pulled the trigger three times but nothing happened because he had run out of bullets.

If you go back in detail all that twelve years ago, it was the most chilling and awful stories that we have seen within the context of our society. I know we have our mass murderers and those sort of things but this was just so normal – people going about their business, going to work and so on.

Brendan Keilar was the father of three little kids. Now that was twelve years ago, so they will be a bit older now. Those three beautiful children. Few years later, the little boy was presented by the Governor a posthumous award for his dad for his courage. (*In reference to a pic on the slides*) That is the plaque for the bravery of these two men for their extraordinary courage and sacrifice that they made. Paul de Waard came back a few years ago on its tenth anniversary. He visited the scene again. It was a very moving experience for him. An extraordinary man who nearly lost his life in that terrible saga. A lot of other details in there, which are very chilling, very mindful of the church, children and the rest of it, that is enough details for something like this. You would perhaps remember it in greater detail but seeing Brendan Keilar's grave really brought it home to me. He was a husband and a dad and he was taken from us, taken from his family under such awful circumstances. Why? Because he has seen someone in need and he went to their aid.

On a day that we have just heard of Jesus and the Good Samaritan, it is probably an extreme example of what Jesus is trying to tell us. When responding to the words, "Who is my neighbour?" It indicates the capacity of people, maybe not everyone, but certainly of some to respond to a need in enormous generosity, with great courage and maybe especially for people that they don't know. People who are total strangers.

And yet somehow the message of the parable of the Good Samaritan, in answer to the question “Who is my neighbour?” has been taken on board and often these days, people talk about the Good Samaritan who probably not know what a Samaritan was or is, probably have no idea about the parable but they have somehow pick up along the way that they are doing good for another person in need, and maybe a little more finely tuned, if they are, to someone who does something out of the goodness of their heart and maybe especially to someone they don’t know - When there is no personal connection with them, and the only connection is the one they forge themselves from a sense of duty, and honour to do the right thing.

The story of Brendan Keilar and Paul de Waard is one that say probably at the highest end of demand but the title of Good Samaritan can often be used for people who do all sorts of things. People who stopped by the roadside to help us to change a tyre or broken down or pushed the car out of the way or whatever.

I remember reading a while back of a woman, that is simple enough and yet it made the news. The woman and her husband was travelling on the lonely part of the country, their son had an attack or a seizure, might have been choking. They rang the ambulance who were giving them instructions to how to clear his airways and so on, but they had no light and they were in the middle of nowhere and trying to work the best they could. A fella pulled up, many cars went passed but one fella pulled up, came over and asked “what can I do” and they asked if he had a light on his phone and he said of course he had. So he held the phone. He provided the light which enable the father to listen to the instructions and the mother carried them out and they saved the life of the little boy.

What did he do? He didn’t put his life at risk. He might be twenty minutes late for an appointment or whatever. He may have stood out in the rain if it was raining, who knows. But he did what he had to do and provided the light. He was a good Samaritan. He didn’t know those people and they didn’t know him until after that.

It’s all an answer to the question – “Who is my neighbour?” And the answer that Jesus gives is, “guess what, your neighbour is everyone.” Your neighbour is anyone in need. If you can do anything, that is what you do. That’s what life is all about.

We know we don’t measure up to that all the time. Maybe we don’t measure up to that nearly as much as we could and should. But there is a degree of training that we could put ourselves into in terms of a mental attitude to be aware of the fact that this good Samaritan opportunities are often there. In fact, being unexpected is part of the whole story because the man by the side of the road didn’t run up to ask for help, or he may have yelled for help, but two of them walked by the other side and who were they? They were people who should have known better. They were people who were trained in the scriptures. They were people who were religious. They were people who have said their prayers. They were people who thought they were better behaved than a lot of others. But they failed the test.

The whole focus of training ourselves to be aware that people can cross our paths and seek our help, or maybe not seek our help but is there nonetheless. We that we can ask “can I help you?” Or maybe in a dramatic circumstance, we realised we got to do something. Those situations maybe not all that common but they are there nonetheless.

How do we focus on expecting the unexpected and how we react?

I remember a story awhile back, in a seminary training young men for the priesthood. I think it was in Chicago. During the course of the year, I think the students were in their third or fourth year, the seminary staff wanted to ascertain how really worthwhile these young men really were. So, they devise a plan and actually got people a part of theatre company who are used to acting. And during the course of the year at different times, sometimes the morning, sometimes at night, in different places, they strategically placed these people in the path of individual seminarians who were going to lecture, or shopping, one by one. Sometimes they ask for help, sometimes they were just there. Maybe they sat as a homeless person by the roadside with cardboard sign saying something like “no money, no job, please help”. The response of these young seminarians was determined later on and some of course passed with flying colours, others – like the two in the gospel, just walked by the other side and didn’t want to know what was happening. And that was a very critical part of their formation and discernment of how much these men really absorbed in two or three, four years of seminary life – only two years away from priesthood. So they sat down and discussed with them on why they have reacted and sometimes, the reaction was even more negative because if they had no sense of what they are going into is not a job, but a vocation, then there was not much future for them.

So the gospel that we have just heard is not just there for seminarians, it is there for everyone of us.

“Who is my neighbour?” Jesus says, guess what, “EVERYONE.” And when are we going to know when our neighbour appears? The neighbour that will knock on the back door, maybe they will give us a call or maybe some how they will just be there in need. Our mission, should we accept it, is to be on the lookout for the people on the side of the road on the way to Jericho would fallen into the brigand’s hands, they are there in the lives of us all. Sometimes, we’ll be the good Samaritan, sometimes we’ll be the priest and the Levite walking passed. Maybe we will be a bit of both, but what would be perhaps the more common response that we have? Let’s pray that the example of the Good Samaritan, an example given to us by Jesus himself can be the one that more often than not, will determine the way we will respond.

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

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