

FR. KEVIN DILLON'S HOMILY DATED 28 JULY 2019

There is a segment that comes on broadcast at the footy on Saturday afternoon that I hear from time to time depending on which game is being broadcast and it's called simply "Why, Why, Why?". The commentators and sometimes the listening audience come in asking different questions – "why did this happened?" "Why was the umpire blind?" or "Why was this person selected again?" and it goes on.

"Why, why, why" is a question that comes to all of us many, many times during the course of our lives. Sometimes it is the big questions. There was a report during the week that a meteor had a near miss, I'm not quite sure how far away it was. I think it was hopefully a few million miles or kilometres but having near a miss coming towards the earth, this is the sort of things that many, many years ago shaped the earth to what it is and dinosaurs made extinct and etc. How come we were missed and how come other times we were hit? So we look at the big picture of how things happen.

Then we look at bigger things like between nations – why in the world did the people of this country elect this person, what was in somebody's else chosen, on an individual basis, why is some person in my family behaves in such a way, why did they get themselves into all sorts of strife and alienated themselves from the family and so on. Why, why, why? We asked this any time at any different levels.

One of this kind came out in the movies a few years ago which is well worth a look, it had several stories within it and as you are watching it, you are asking "why, why, why" and "what is this got to do with the other?" The movie is called "Grand Canyon". It is about 30 years or thereabouts and probably on YouTube if you want to have a look at it. Well worth a look indeed. It is at least three or four intersecting stories and you wonder what in the world can be the relevance of one to the other?

It starts off with a fella who is fairly well-to-do and he's driving home from a baseball game or football game and he decides to take a short cut because the traffic is so busy and of course, his car plays up and he is stuck in this lonely, industrial area and soon enough, a car containing a few thugs goes past and he feels very threatened indeed. And he is saved by a tow truck driver who was passing by and recognises the problem straight away. The first guy is white, the tow truck driver is black, played by Danny Glover who is Mel Gibson's mate in all those crazy Lethal Weapon movies. They struck up a friendship and that becomes the rest of the story and these intersecting stories because when we talk about the six degrees of separation, we are all linked. We are all linked not just in terms of individuals in relationships, but we are all linked in terms of our story, our history and it all sort of links in, in many different ways. We just don't see it that way. It is not until the last reel, as what we called in the old days as movies are on reels, and that it all comes together and you see how the different parts of life how it all somehow intersects.

Anyway, these two somehow struck up a bit of a conversation, and get to meet one another, one to say thank you and then they share a coffee together. And then Danny Glover's character (I have to look it up again, forgot what his name was), he said, in many ways, life itself is so mixed up, it is like the Grand Canyon and we are silly enough not to realise how small we really are. And if you sit at the edge of the Grand Canyon, you do

realise how small we really are. Have a look the Grand Canyon, here's a few shots (*refers to photos in presentation slides*). I've never been there but they say that it is absolutely mind-blowing in terms of its enormity. Well, one day I'll go or if not, when we get our cinema going, I'll put it up on the big screen.

The majesty of God's power in creation alone is quite extraordinary. As we wrestle with our individual problems, we are really not that important and yet we are that important. We need to know our place in other words. And that's what linked in today as we have got two sections in the gospel.

We have got the Lord's Prayer, or be it a slightly shortened version. We know all that, in fact we know it all so well that we do not realise what it says. It is a prayer of praise and thanksgiving, and petition all in just that few, marvellous sentences given to us by Jesus himself. But then He goes on to talk about whatever you are praying, whatever you ask for, it will be given to you and we probably sit there and think – no, wait, hang on a minute. I've been praying for all my numbers to come up in Tattsлото for twenty five years and it still hasn't happened! So what is this all about – 'Ask and it shall be given to you', doesn't apply to me. Well, that is when you got to look at that Grand Canyon of life itself and realised all the different stories and how they intersect and realised that when we talk about Our Father, to think of God as a loving parent, we can connect with that, because we know that good parenting does not mean give the child everything he or she wants. In fact, we have observed others who may have overindulged their children, and what's the phrase that we use in terms of those kids – we say those kids are spoilt rotten. Spoilt because a foolish parent, loving the child but overindulging is turning the child's lesson of life into one of total self-serving, and self-centredness. That is not the way it goes.

Somehow or rather, these two things – the our Father, God as a loving parent and then 'ask and you shall receive and it will be given to you' but maybe not necessarily the way you think it should be.

Read a story many years ago about a young fellow who went to university and studied very hard. He made a few hints, maybe not all that subtle, to his father, that he would love a sports car if he succeeded in getting a particular mark. He worked his heart out and he achieved that, got the pass, the credits and so on. He went to see his dad and his dad says "I'm very proud of you, son. Well done" and presented to him a box. Inside the box was a bible. And the son hit the roof. He said "I've worked my heart out for the last four years because of what you said you will do for me and here it is, you just gave me this." He threw the bible at his father, walked out and they never spoke for another twenty-five years. After twenty-five years, the father was sick. Other family members contacted him, and said "you should come and see your dad before he dies". He relented after twenty-five years of total estrangement. He went to see his dad and his dad was on his very last part of his life and was unable to speak. But he saw in the house, the bible he has thrown at his father in anger and he began to regret he has behaved in such a way and so estranged from his dad. He picked up the bible and it looked like it hasn't been thumbed through at all, had those gold edges that bibles often had. And he found that there was something there. Guess what? There was a key, the key from a dealership twenty-five years before, for the car he had so wished he could have. He had been given the gift but because he got so angry that it didn't come to him the way he expected, the whole thing just went completely pear-shaped.

Not unlike what we do. We can be given the gifts, we just don't understand where it is all going. The amazing thing we see particularly with sickness, people often say when sickness comes into their lives or someone they love, "how can God be so unfair?" I've done this and my mum has done that, this shouldn't happen. Let's face it, we know it from day one that we were going to die and we know that there is no totally pleasant way of doing that. But so often within the context of an illness, there is an opportunity to build bridges. There was an opportunity to make amends. There is an opportunity to say "I love you" or "I'm sorry", things we would never do otherwise.

There is a marvellous initiative that has emerged in palliative care. And I've seen that happened on a number of occasions over the years, when someone is in palliative care, if they are able to do so, someone would come along and they are special people who were trained for this, they were people who will express to them "Would you like to write an autobiography?"

Now, on the surface when you hear of this thing, you will say "how absolutely ridiculous!" "I was born in such and such a day, in such and such a place" and go through the details, how do you do that for a whole life when you are at the last lap. Of course you can't do that. What an autobiography is, is what it got people to think about their life and it doesn't mean to be chapter inversent – what happened in school, your first job and whatever. It is about what are the things you want to say, that you want to put down in writing, for the people who like you, for the people who care about you, so that it will be there for them. And they take those notes, maybe one or two, maybe five or six little sessions they might have. They are skilled and trained people and they formulate them into a gift that is given to the family after the death of that person. And the miracles, for want of a better word, that could emerge from such experiences are profound indeed.

So, we don't know the whole story 'til the last reel. We do not know the complexity of the 'Canyon of Life' until we are able to draw back and look at the whole picture. God is our loving Father and He knows us far better than we know ourselves.

Let's pray in the good things and the tough things that come our way, we'll see His guiding hand, His loving spirit.
