

## **Fr. KEVIN DILLON'S HOMILY DATED 18.08.2019**

I read during the week, and mentioned it in mass earlier today but- the cost of building a house today in Melbourne, 37% of it belongs to bureaucracy. Permits and taxes. In Sydney it's even higher, it's climbing up to nearly 50% so don't worry about the builder, don't worry about the materials, don't worry about the skills of the people who are needed to put the building up in the first place. Nearly half goes in all these bits and pieces. And you might say well we've gotta have those things and the soil tests and this that and the other. And that seems ok. And then you turn over a couple of pages and you read of some of the multi-story towers that are being built. And they're creaking, and they're groaning, and people are being forced out of them because they're scared the whole thing is going to collapse- and then you look at the cladding and that's another story altogether and away we go. So we've got the bureaucracy, we've got the cheques and the balances but we're not all that balanced in the main.

And as a result of course, we have endless disputes. In the courts and outside of the courts, and that costs a fortune and one side gets lawyers and the other side gets lawyers, and the lawyers probably do very well out of it, and the people involved in the dispute are nearly broke to a point along the line where they think 'is it worth it?', and everything can fall apart very quickly. We're very good at fighting with each other. And that can happen within the context of a workplace, it can happen with organisations, and it can happen very much in the home. And Jesus talks about that today, and He actually gives it a very domestic thrust. Talking about parents, and children, and in-laws and whatever. But really He's talking about the whole capacity we have to argue with each other, to take action against one another, to try and seek justice as we see it and maybe we're absolutely correct. But this whole process of humanity is one that brings so much angst and difficulty and sadness and often, sickness as well. Because the mind and the body work very much together.

And any number of people have had very stressful times in disputes and arguments, followed up by a health deterioration sometimes even fatal. So the whole notion of how we don't get on with one another is a very critical part of human life and how we live it. Most of the time when we read a book, watch a movie or a television drama or whatever, there are disputes and arguments all the way through. And Jesus recognises that, and He knows

that even His message will bring arguments and disputes, and bitterness and division. And He says well, that's the way it's going to be. That's the way it was, that's the way it is, and that's the way it will in all likelihood continue to be, it's just the way we are.

So it doesn't matter whether it's the CFA, or the east west link, or as I mentioned a couple of weeks ago, arguments over wills or whatever. Or workplace disputes, who's doing their job and who isn't, or whether it's in the schoolyard. Any of us can get into an area of dispute, and maybe especially within the context where it hurts most, is within the context of family, and those we really care about. Those we have trusted and loved. And somehow or other, everything goes sort of pear shaped, and it all falls apart. And we might say well we're Christians so all we have to do is very simple. We just have to say 'what would Jesus do?'. It's a good question, and it can help. But in terms of you can take two people who are very prayerful, very holy people. Say their prayers all the time, and they both say about an area of difference, 'what would Jesus do?'. And more often than not they would say, Jesus would do what I want to do. And it doesn't necessarily bring about any real sort of reconciliation.

So maybe with this gospel today and even aware of the very public disputes that are there within the context of our church, of church regulation and teaching and civil authorities and so on. This whole area of conflict, conflict can bring about world wars, it can bring about family break up, it can bring about enormous tension in the work place and so on. So how do we manage it, and there's none of us who are exempt from that. Within families, within any number of different areas. And it hurts, and it burns, and it doesn't go away. And as we come before the Lord as we do, particularly within the context of a conflict that put Jesus on the cross. We've gotta say well, how do we apply areas of wisdom, gained wisdom, surely we've learned something in 2000 years of Christian teaching and who knows how many thousands of years of just people interacting with one another.

But we've got to learn it all over again, each for ourselves. And a few things which might be helpful as a bit of a checklist. Within the context of our faith and recognising that today Jesus says to us well, address this, no it won't go away, but approach it in a way that hopefully can make things a little better. Now I grew up in a home where my father, for better or for worse, one of his jobs was as a magistrate. As a result of that, whenever the

four of us kids had a blue, he would run the whole show like a court. Goodness gracious. “Stand over there and you stand over there. Tell your story and you tell your story”. But it worked, it was good, it was great. And the people in the office, they know what was put onto me, the rule number 1: get the facts. If nothing else was drilled into me as a kid, that’s what it is. What is the real situation? We hear “oh so and so said this about you”, or “I’d heard that you’d done that”, and it can be a lot of rubbish. And it can be fiction, or it could be almost the truth, nothing but the truth, but not the whole truth.

So when we get into a situation where the temperature starts to rise, because somebody’s done something or said something, or whatever, one of the key things we need to do is get the facts. Another thing which is helpful, particularly when a relationship is being threatened, to say well how do we fix this. To ask ourselves the question, what does a relationship mean? Is the point of issue snowy on the tram? Who we haven’t seen before and will never see again? Or is the point of issue maybe someone who is a family member, whom we care about and whom when push comes to shove we really love. If that’s the case, well when we really work towards a reconciliation, and a healing, and maybe, horror of horrors, maybe we’re prepared to give a little bit of ground. Maybe we recognise we don’t have it all our own way. It’s not a matter of win at all costs, because there’s something more important at stake. There are people at stake, there are feelings at stake, there’s others who are around us and are looking at us saying “surely you guys can sort this out better”.

Life is too short, what we are to one another is too important. So evaluating the relationship and working out is it worth it, the answer often enough is yes, it is. It’s worth stepping back, it’s worth making allowance. Because who knows where I am, who knows where they are, but ultimately, we care about each other. As well as that, there’s also the potential to get, in any area of dispute, some good advice from a trusted friend. And tell them everything, and then listen. And say something along the lines of “don’t tell me what I want to hear, tell me what I need to hear”. Which may well be, you’ve messed this up big time, and really you need to fix it. And it’s in your court to do the next thing if you really value the relationship. And that trusted friend needs to know and have the freedom to be able to tell things as they really see them. That’s what trust is all about.

And so these are some of the things that we can take on board to try and bring about some sort of healing in the disputes that so often come our way. And to know that winning isn't everything. To know what we are to one another is so much greater. There's one more thing. When you get to my age you can't remember more than three things in a row. A little story, true story. A few years ago, I was talking to a lady who was telling me of an issue. A long running, no speak situation she'd had with someone who was a dear and trusted friend. And anyhow her 50th birthday came along, a milestone. And she said of course this person would've been top of the invitation list to the little party they were going to have. But they hadn't spoken for about 3 years. And she was beginning to wonder whether she could even remember what it was about. But she could remember, but she thought about it and she thought, well, what do I do?

If I don't invite her, that'd be the nail in the coffin. But if I do invite her, how's this going to work. So she wrote to her and she said look. I know we've had this blue, she didn't even mention what the issue was. But I really do care about you and I value our friendship very much indeed. If you would like to, I'd like to meet up and have a coffee. And we won't talk about the issue, just put it aside and concentrate on what we are to one another and the friendship that we've shared for many years. And before she sent it, she went to someone who cared about them both, and said what do you reckon, is this going to work? And the other friend said well it might, it might not, but at least you know that you've tried, wait and see. So she sent it off, it was a few years ago in the days of letters rather than emails which can cause half of the disputes anyhow, emails sent in haste. So off it went, might as well have been an email because by return mail, she received a hand written letter saying "you've made my day. Best thing to ever happen to me was to read your letter today. Yes of course we'll meet up."

And the whole thing was healed, because one was prepared to step back a little, and the other was prepared to step forward a little, and someone worthwhile in between was there to make a valued judgement on what was going to work. And that friendship was healed, and it's still a strong friendship, and the issue has never been mentioned by either. Put it aside, because it wasn't important. If they'd brought up the issue, the whole thing could've fallen apart again. But it wasn't a matter of denial or blindness, it was just saying

look. There are some things which we will always see things differently on, but it's what we are to one another that counts. So Jesus talks about these different relationships within the family, He's talking accurately of course, about what would happen within the context of faith and religious disputes.

And there's been any number of different examples of that, in Jesus' time, since Jesus' time, and very much in our own time. And maybe in your time too. Where religious practice and fidelity are an area of great discord, within the context of family. For some of you, there will be family members who say for goodness sake, why do you go to church, why do you go to mass. And they'll reel off any number of reasons, and it's an area of tension. You value it, clearly, because you're here. And the one thing that you would want from those people would be to share your faith with them, and they with you. And yet, that sort of disharmony is part and parcel. It's not a matter of digging in, it's a matter of saying where can we find the love, the harmony, the common points that we have for one another. And maybe at this mass we can think of maybe one relationship that we might have that might be just a bit prickly, it might be we might've thought it was destroyed. But maybe it can be resurrected. Maybe it's just something that we've got to manage, maybe in the workplace or in the family, and we ask for God's help.

To be able to give us the grace to somehow build the bridge that needs to be built. Human lack of harmony and discord will always be there, but it's how we approach it and how we manage it that really counts. And if we do that in the knowledge that we are really trying to do what Jesus would want us to do, well, maybe we might make further ground than we might think. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.