

## Fr KEVIN'S HOMILY DATED 01.09.19

Few days ago when I was away, I was visiting someone, being he friend who was staying at a city hotel in Sydney where I was and I got out of the lift and there was a sort of a, I think it was round about half past five in the evening and it was a gathering of people there for some sort of social function and I looked around, but I couldn't find what I needed. What I needed was noise cancelling headphones. It was absolutely, talk about a grand final crowd. I suppose what happens when people come together in large numbers is, in order to be heard you've got to yell, and if you yell, well if somebody else needs to be heard has to yell louder and so this goes on and on and on, but I was interested because I read a report a few days ago and I think it was published in papers this weekend, that the current trend in restaurants and cafes and so on, eating places, for minimalist furnishings, so you've got hard floor, hard surfaces, concrete everywhere, of course amplifies the noise enormously and that's good for the person running the restaurant because then they don't have to spend much on all the ambience and surround.

But the downside is apparently, due to several studies, not sure who says let's have a study on this, but they say, because of the noise you don't enjoy your food as much. Your sense of taste is dulled, sweet things aren't so sweet and salty things aren't so salty. So remember where you heard it first, in terms of that extraordinary piece of information, but isn't it interesting that this sort of whole surround of what you have can make a big difference to the way in which we even enjoy the occasion. I'm sure plenty of us have been to gatherings where it was just so noisy and if it wasn't the crowd or the band or the band and the crowd, and sitting next to someone and you probably had no idea, almost started to write notes to one another. It's something which we're still getting used to as a society is, as a community is, because we go out so much.

Turn the clock back a few years, not all that many, and occasionally your family might go out to the corner hotel for Sunday lunch for a special occasion, but these days, people go out for breakfast, morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner, supper and may be kick on till 3 o'clock in the morning somewhere and the whole notion of eating and drinking and hospitality and celebrations and occasions, where we gather together in that social context is light years ahead of where it was, even maybe even

10 or 15 years ago. I mean whoever heard of going out for breakfast for goodness sake, but people do all the time. I do from time to time, not all the time, but it's one of those, it's become a social occasion to go out and have your fruit loaf, or your scrambled eggs or whatever in your local coffee shop and whatever and there's people coming in and out and getting their cappuccinos and off to work and so on.

The whole way in which we express that sense of social environment has changed enormously and it's become one of the key ways in which we interact with one another. And once we talk about how we interact with one another, we look towards how the Lord wants us to react and respond and be in those occasions and for many it's a different ball game from what it was where the only sense of social engagement was once in a while and may be lunch at work around the old table or whatever it might be in the workplace and bring out sandwiches and whatever, but the whole notion of going into a social environment, let's catch up for coffee. People do, so what do we make of those occasions is a real challenge for us in the words of Jesus today, because interestingly enough even though we go back 2000 years, Jesus was a very social sort of person. He was often out for a meal, I don't know about breakfast, but, well yeah he did, he had breakfast, he had breakfast on the shores of the lake of Galilee after his resurrection.

He began his public ministry at a wedding reception. He gave us the great gift of the Eucharist in his last meal, the last supper or last specific meal gathered but then follows it up after the resurrection again at a sense of asking for something to eat when the apostles and Mary were together in the upper room. He dined with Zacchaeus, he went to the homes of Pharisees and Mary Magdalene came to him. He was constantly in a social situation and he used the situations to teach sometimes by words, sometimes by actions and at all times these many occasions are recorded in the gospel, there is a great message to us, here the meal that's given is an imaginary one, he says suppose one of you goes out to a wedding reception and so on.

But there's a message there too because it's such a key area of human behaviour, whether it's an even of course within the context of family around the family breakfast table or dinner table or whatever or picnic lunch on a weekend, or half time at the footy or whatever it might happen to be or what we're doing here, in its own way, we come together for the sacrifice of mass but the meal of the Eucharist is well.

We gather around the table and we receive food and drink of the body and blood of Jesus. It's an incredibly powerful and important image that we have, but what's Jesus saying to us in this gospel today about the lowest place and the highest place. He's saying something very important and very practical to us, he says, take these occasions seriously and recognise that they are opportunities because it's in those circumstances in the social engagements that you have, that you are engaging with one another and you can make it a winning or a losing situation.

You can come closer to one another and closer to God or you can move away from one another and move away from God. And he says something to us which is really important and he says you can work this out simply by thinking about it before hand. Now one of the great inventions I suppose or customs of the modern era and that happens a lot at the more formal functions where there's been invitations and so on, you go in and you'll see the seating list. Now everybody does it though and I must admit I breathe a sigh of relief, you are going to something like that. You have a look at table no. 2 or table no. 14 or whatever it might happen to be, so you stop for a while, I do, and I think, I look and I see who's on the table, who do I know, who do I think I know and very importantly who else is at this show. So you look at the other tables because it might be someone who you really want to catch up with or they may well be someone you do not want to catch up with and you can make sure they can avoid you and you can avoid them.

In other words, you do your homework, doing preparation is what Jesus is saying. Sure it's about the lowest place, the highest place and so on, but what he is saying is he's giving us the old boy scouts thing of be prepared, don't just move in to a situation without thinking, as you're getting there, whether you're walking or driving or coming from the car park or whatever, to think to ourselves what's this I'm going to, who am I going to be with, it may be someone that we said some time ago, let's catch up for coffee and as we're driving there to meet them, we think, they've had a really rough deal, their mum died a couple of months back and husband's very sick or whatever, kids are playing up, in this might be a really good opportunity, cannot say too much about myself, but just to really listen to them because I might be the only person that's going to listen to them today or this week or this month, this is a great opportunity may be to really do something worthwhile, sure we're catching up

for coffee, no big deal, but what do we do without occasion, what does Jesus want me to do without occasion?

Taking the lowest place does not necessarily mean walking to a particular spot at the table, it means going into a situation and saying to the people that we're with, people round about, you are important, you are valuable, your friendship, being with you is important to me and I'm not going to just be here to tell you about how terrific I am, I want to hear about you and this is an opportunity for me to really do something really worthwhile for God and that can be there in the simplest of functions, it might be the wedding reception, but it might also be just over morning tea at work, to be a listener, to be aware of the needs of the other, to be able to may be give some helpful assurance or reassurance to people who are really struggling, that's the way we take the lowest place.

We don't have to necessarily humble ourselves or humiliate ourselves, it can be just as simple as listening to say, this person I'm with, whether it's one or whether it's half a dozen or whether it's a corporate function of some description or other, of you ever go to those and there are a bunch of strangers and we're sitting beside a person with a name tag or other person with a name tag and we might think I'm never going to meet this person again, but it might also start a friendship that might be treasured and valued, if not by us, certainly by them. So social functions, we all go to them in a way it can be, you can apply all of that to what we do here, to what we think about when we're coming to mass as we park the car and walk in the door or may be walk out the door, who we see, who we greet. To see those as an occasion where we could say this is not about me, this is about them.

Let's recognise that opportunity that we have when we come together as we do here, when we gather around the family table, when we meet up for coffee, when we go out to a formal dinner, any of those things, so much part and parcel of their life as far remembered that Jesus himself took the time out to give us some very worthwhile and practical advice about how we should manage it, how we should behave and especially how we should put the others first after his own example.

=====