

Homily – 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A) – 2 July 2017

Fr. Kevin Dillon

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Over the years from time to time I've copped a bit of a beating from Parishioners who'll say '*you're always talking about football*'. It's not true but I'm not sure it would be such a bad thing even if it was true because even for people who don't follow the footy the reason I suppose I mention it from time to time is a sense of analogy, it's something that we're very familiar with and it's a lot in common in terms of Church and Religion and Liturgy. People come together for an event, the main players have special clothing, you don't have to pay to get in but there is a sense of engagement and a sort of a drama unfolds which can be quite heart stopping in the case of footy, not necessarily in the case of Liturgy but there is a sense also though, of team, of belonging, of history, of tradition and indeed of loyalty.

I had a phone call last night from a reporter from The Age who indicated she was calling around to see what Priests would be talking about this weekend and I can assure you they don't do that very often. I said "*Well in view of the events of this week I find it's a bit easier to craft something in writing*" which is what I've done in the Bulletin in terms of where we can be for the considerable distress if not pain and anguish which many people feel, not everybody necessarily. Interestingly there was one Priest in the article which was published today and it said something along the lines of '*one Priest who preferred not to be named said he didn't think people would be very interested*' well not the people I've been listening to I must say but I wondered why he didn't want to be named whoever it was, I have no idea but I have had many people who are distressed, hurting, as we do in times like this.

Now when I was a kid I grew up, as I still do I've got two footy teams as you know, I've got 'Geelong' a paid up member which is probably more than some of you are and 'South Melbourne' now 'Sydney'. Now I'll tell you what, when I was growing up they were lean times indeed and in fact the Premiership that was won in 2005 was the first in my lifetime and I'd only seen South/Sydney in one Grand Final in my life, I was sixty years of age before they made a Grand Final, before they won a flag.

So it's been tough times and it demands a lot, I can remember when the decision was made to move the Club to Sydney from South Melbourne, *Well it was on for young and old because of people who said 'no this is the Lake', 'that's our home'* and whatever and others who said '*there's no future unless the Club moves*' etcetera and the rest as they say '*is history*'.

The interesting thing is in those sort of analogies and comparisons of Religion and Footy there is the element of loyalty and in particular what happens when things are tough, what happens when you're on a losing streak year after year after year, wooden spoon after

wooden spoon and if not that close enough to it. What happens when there is all sorts of disruptions within the context of the organisation itself, amongst the players, a bit like we've got in the Cricket but I haven't really caught up on that at the moment but amongst the players, amongst the Committee, whatever, all sorts of disruptions. A perfect parallel in many ways was the Essendon saga of recent years and it's so destructive and people say 'well I'm not going to renew my membership, I'm not interested, I won't go anymore', some stay, some go.

That's what's happening with us now, it's not just the Catholic Church but so many religions but the Catholic Church has got an enormous hit over recent years and even in specific cases of course we can't go down that path, things will play themselves out within the context of Court hearings but it could be a long time, it could be quite a long time and it's going to be tough going for all of us, all of those many people that I've spoken to in recent days who say **'they love their faith, they love the Church but they're just bewildered'**. It's not a matter of making any judgment, none of us can do that obviously in all sorts of areas of fairness but it hurts.

This is not why we're part of the Church, we want to be part of the Church to get comfort, to get direction, to get a sense of purpose in our life, to get consolation when we need it and most of all to have **'a relationship with Jesus Christ'**. Even in the last couple of days so many people have said that their children particularly have said, **'why do you bother, for goodness sake, waste of time'; it's not a waste of time, never has been, please God never will be because it is a point of connection with Jesus Christ and a suffering Church is a suffering Christ, it hasn't been any different from the First Holy Thursday it's just gone on since then.**

In terms of the wellbeing of the organisation to which we belong and which we love, well it's a free country, we can stay or we can go but ultimately it's a matter not of any individuals or any organisational structures or whatever it's a matter of how we link up with Jesus Christ, how we link up with one another through the tough times.

As a kid I used to go down to the Lake Oval, try and stand near someone who had some of those big steel cans of beer because I knew by the second half I could stand on them and maybe see a bit over the back of the people in front and it was rough going because they didn't do too well at all but they were **'my team, they were my colours – red and white – and that doesn't change'** the fact that I've added Geelong to it makes no difference I can tell you, it doesn't I'm happy if Sydney succeed and I'm happy when Geelong succeed and if they play each other I'm happy anyhow.

It's the **loyalty**, it's the sense of **belonging**, it's what we need with one another and we've got to look and say **'well if we walk away what happens to St. Vincent De Paul, what happens to our partnership with Viqueque, those people in East Timor who rely on us'**. Now people might say **'we don't have to come to Mass to do that'** but the reality is that the

Eucharist is the binding force, the organisation is not the binding force the Eucharist, Jesus is the binding force and that's why I stay and that's why I will stay through all of this difficult as it is, enormously difficult, none of us ever thought that in the last, not just this week but all that we've had to get through of the rough ride of the last twenty years in particular and beyond, none of us ever thought that our being part of the Church would require that of us but it has. It's not unlike any other family, how many families don't have a rough time at times where they really have to work through, they have a loyalty to one another and somehow or other whether it's financial or whether it's relationships or whatever it is the family that's meant to be is not what we've got at the time but you hang in because it's family and because it's something where well we don't know what we'll have until it goes away, we don't know what we've got until it's gone.

So yeah I struggle to put all those things together this weekend verbally, I put a little bit in the Bulletin which hopefully is, I don't know helpful but for all the problems of football analogies I think this isn't a bad one because there is that sense of belonging, it's our team and it's what we make it ourselves in large degree, it's not the Committee, it's not even the players, it's that hard to determine thing that makes it what it is and ultimately it's about Jesus Christ and about the way in which we connect with Jesus each and every day of our life.

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