

Fr Kevin Dillon - HOMILY DATED 22/03/2020

I was talking to a friend the other day, and not surprisingly we were talking about the current situation, what else is there? I suppose you could talk about Richmond and Carlton ...

This friend said, one of the things that is really difficult is that we can't find anyone to blame. I thought that was an astute comment. Who do we blame in all of this? Maybe in the course of time that may come forward, where there was wrong doing or conspiracy or whatever. But that's nothing that we can do anything about and we just don't know.

Often when things go wrong we get a certain amount of comfort from being able to point the finger – you did this, or you didn't do that, or whatever. We often ask when things go wrong, whose fault was this? And we also ask the question, why did this happen?

It's fascinating that in the gospel that I just read, the story of the blind man in St John's Gospel, that Jesus is asked, who sinned for this man to have been born blind? Was it this fellow, himself, or was it his mum or dad? Someone has to be blamed for this. If this fellow is blind it is somebody's fault, who is it? Jesus says, guess what, it was neither of them, sometimes things just happen and we have to adapt and adjust and manage the situation in which we find ourselves.

I looked at the gospel for this weekend. It is pretty relevant in its own way. We can go looking for blame and explanations, but perhaps the most important thing is there in the psalm that we read - *The Lord is my Shepherd there is nothing I shall want* - and it's in that sense of looking to the Lord for comfort, for strength and for guidance that we are going to somehow work our way through something that is uncharted waters.

We know so much more now than at the time of the Spanish flu of over a hundred years ago, and that is good in some ways, because we have much better medical knowledge, but it's a bit nerve-racking in other ways because we're up to date with the latest here, there and everywhere and that can be comforting if we get good news from the other side of the world, but there is also bad news from the other side of the world. We're all in this together. Where can we run? Where can we hide? The answer is, nowhere, so we have to manage it best ourselves within our community, within our parishes and churches, our own families and groups of friends and the very depths of our souls and hearts.

It was fascinating that this gospel was there today. It comes up every three years and it asks that questions, why do bad things happen to good people? I can remember a few years ago, when the Malaysian airliner was shot down and there were about thirty Australians on board. I found out

later that I had known one of them – he used to be an altar boy of mine. Over the years there have been various investigations and people have been charged and I think that's going on almost as we speak. At the time the airliner seemed to disappear into thin air. No-one knew what had happened to it. Eventually it merged together.

These are circumstances that we have to negotiate where we can't necessarily find blame, although there probably is blame somewhere, but finding the answer to 'why' is more important and sometimes we don't even get that. And that's why that question asked by the people of Jesus, who sinned, whose fault is it, why did this happen? Is a very common and natural question when things go pear shaped for us.

It doesn't just have to be worldwide disaster. It can be an illness, an exam that someone has worked very hard for and somehow or other through circumstances of family and so on, they are just not up to speed on the day and so on. The bad things that happen to us despite the fact that we try to have the Lord as our shepherd and we just don't understand.

Maybe the gospel is helpful to us today. Maybe it can help us to get through the next week, or few weeks, or whatever. To not beat ourselves up, not beat others up, somehow with God's grace to get through.

The gospel in a way asks the question. The psalm maybe gives us the answer.

He guides me along the right path. He is true to his name. If I should walk in the valley of darkness no evil shall I fear. You are there with your crook and your staff, with these you give me comfort.

Focussing on those words, to a degree, gives us the answer to the question of why, but also how, how we manage this.

We manage this with the words : *The Lord is my shepherd there is nothing I shall want.*