FR. KEVIN DILLON’S HOMILY DATED 31.05.2020

When I was younger, so much younger than today, as a child I have always enjoyed the delivery, albeit 3 months late of an American evening magazine called the Saturday Evening Post. I’m not sure if it is published, I don’t think it is but marvellous magazine, it is a family magazine had items of family interests, it was a bit like the Good Weekend we see in the Fairfax papers these days but had a bit of everything in it. I enjoyed looking at it, I love looking at the cars. My love for Yank tanks were probably born by reading the Saturday Evening Post. But they had lots of little cartoons – just one image type cartoon with one humorous line underneath. Some of them were in series – there was a maid, I think it was a domestic working maid was Hazel I think, was always towards the back. The other series that they used to have often was would show someone doing something and the heading was ‘Famous Last Words’. You will see something happening and the caption underneath would be what the person was doing what in fact turned out to be reality.

And it is something that has come into our often, normal conversation where somebody said something and the result has been something different in terms of something that had never been envisaged.

A phrase that can often be termed as ‘Famous Last Words’ which will be something like “it will never catch on” and of course a few months later or years later it’s all the go so you would have after the Second World War some of the Italian immigrants brought with them this called pizza or pizza (with an accent, sic) some people would it. It’ll never catch on. Sure did.

Go back a hundred years and somebody came up with the idea of a horseless carriage and others would say “nah, that’ll never catch on – a horse that would hardly would have to feed it don’t have to do anything for it and they will do what you like – why do you want to go and get petrol and have to get that out of the ground and have to transport it from places, pay a lot more money for it. No horseless carriage should never take on. So we see that on so many different levels because we are often not all of us but a proportion of people are highly resistant to change. Something change of any description but particularly when we’re comfortable, we think things are going okay even if they’re not, but the idea of changing is something that we find pretty distasteful.

Today is a day in which we recognise that the apostles had a big change. Huge change in their life and thanks be to God, they embraced it. They went out and ran with it. And well we’re here, you’re part of this mass be it in person or on website you’re part of this mass because of their faith and they let the spirit work within them.

We’re at a time a very interesting time of human history, just about society history but maybe of human history this global shutdown that we’ve experienced, the health issues that have been so tragically destructive for the lives of many people.

Well, we’ve been very, very blessed indeed in this country so far and let’s hope it stays that way but we also have got to see the whole thing on a global basis. It is something which is ushering in enormous change for example, I’d never heard of Zoom meetings until about two months ago. Now they’re all the go. Everybody knows about it.
Families are having dinner over it, meetings are being held from international conferences are being held by Zoom, choirs are singing to it and it’s become all the go. And some years ago, I read a story of it, somebody said it’ll never catch on. Well, put it in the right circumstances and it does.

Within that context, and on this Pentecost Sunday, I’d just like to mention something that I did write about in our bulletin last week and just maybe briefly expand upon it and that is - what do we take with us from this extraordinary experience of these past few months and indeed in all likelihood some of the months to come, where some things will change remarkably, some things would have changed a little and many things will have changed forever.

I would suggest that our attention to hygienic practices and so on, that’s something that’s going to be here to stay and if we’re running a firm manufacturing in sanitizing solution and so on, you’d be doing very nicely indeed and I hope likely to be into the future as that becomes something that we’re aware of what a difference it can make, but from the perspective of our church, how has that changed?

Well, it’s changed in one way because we’ve had a shutdown and until now here in Australia and Victoria we haven’t been able to even go into a church, let alone pray together. We can gather only in small and limited numbers and we don’t know how long that will continue at the moment.

Here, at St Simon’s and in every other parish throughout the country and maybe throughout the world we’re talking about how do we work through things like confirmations and first communions and so on. When will those numbers be possible to be able to do those things, let alone weddings and of course, we know that funerals which can’t be put on hold but that’s been a very burdensome area of life for a lot of people having to farewell a love one under circumstances far different from what they would have envisaged or wanted. That’s the negative part of things of having to shut down.

Is there a positive? Well, guess there is. Says me, looking at a camera and a cinematographer as well.

The reality is, that we have learned through the extraordinary power of the internet that we can bring church services and maybe especially the mass itself into the lives of any number of people anywhere in the world and very importantly at any time of day of their choice and that’s as great footy coach Bob David would have said “that is fair dinkum unbelievable”. That is fantastic in terms of the opportunity that it gives. The point is though when eventually, we’re all saying “oh hopefully, the restrictions will be lifted” we’ll be okay. Please God they will be and things can get back to that word normal again to a degree but this is something we can’t let go of.

We’ve experienced the fact that we can bring the message of the Lord into the lives of any number of people who for any number of different circumstances, be they you know, an aged care facility you know on the frailty of the physical frailty and inability. Other people who are perhaps would love to be able to get to mass if they could but all sorts of different circumstances of working demands and son on that they have, others trying to run around kids are here, there and everywhere because the footy trainings on Sunday morning etc.
All of those things are leading to an opportunity now where people can say I can be part of Mass, I can pray along with my parish here or even on the other side of the world. I can be linked with them very much within my heart, within my mind, within my soul. Is it as good as being there – no, it’s not but it’s still pretty good and is it going to affect attendances? Well, probably not. I can remember going back when the television first came in and there was a big worry about if they televised the footy, no one would go, so they only televised the last quarter for awhile, and then of course it started to grow and now television is such that it really has kept football alive and kept it funded over the time.

Now what we have certainly for our parish and by when I say our parish, I mean you who are present here and you who are present here, we have an enormous opportunity on this Pentecost Sunday to take on board the work of the spirit within the context of liturgy and within the context of technology to bring the message of today. That’s not my message for goodness sake, that’s God’s message within the context of what’s here in our scripture of the extraordinary and wonderful words of the eucharistic prayer of that whole act of faith that we make in the reception of holy communion and which is replicated in the marvellous way in our spiritual communion.

How do we continue that? Well, it’s certainly our hope and expectation at St Simon’s is to be able to continue that as much as possible on going as best we can. But for all of you, it’s an opportunity also to suggest to people that you know who are part of your family and say “Oh yeah I haven’t gone to mass for a while, well, okay, sit down here, we’ll go to mass, pull out your phone or your iPad or your laptop or whatever” and people are doing fascinatingly enough because time is one of the key elements that dictates how we make our choices, what we’ve got time for and where there are specific times whether it’s the time set down for mass or whatever, there are conflicts of time.

If we can still connect with the Lord in a prayerful and eucharistic way at any time, well that’s another story again. And true, what’s happened over these past few months, we’ve learned that that is possible indications are for ourselves that and I saw this not just here, from our St Simon’s masses but I read a report indicating that in so many cases people are watching online masses later in the day. Maybe 10 o’clock at night before they go to bed, it’s their night prayer for goodness sake. Doesn’t matter, as long as it’s their prayer and we can expand that and we can take that message on board and tell people about the fact that mass is available online.

So that is a thought for the day, something to hopefully get them motivated, whether it’s consolation or exhilaration or any other “-tion” to be able to find those available to them just by picking up their phone or their iPad or their laptop or their PC or their tv of course, you can get it on the tv just if you’ve got a smart tv, get on the YouTube channel and it’s all there.

These are extraordinary opportunities that we take on board on this Pentecost Sunday that here, we had a list of ministries - here’s a brand new one – absolutely brand new one, of being able to bring to the attention of other people what is within their capacity to enliven and enrich their faith through the use of technology and in particular through regular participation in the eucharist if for whatever reason it’s not possible to do it in person, as is the case for probably 90 plus percent of the world’s population at the moment.
Well, okay, we can do it – you can’t go in the front door, we can always go around the side. The side is locked, we can go around the back. But we’ll get in eventually, find an open window somewhere. We use that ingenuity in so many other different areas. So we locked ourselves out, we think, ‘who’s got a key’, we ring someone who we know is a good locksmith or we ring the young fellow down the road who’s just got out of prison for breaking and entering say “hey, can you come and let us in” – but we find some way of getting in on this Feast of Pentecost, which could be an absolutely pivotal Feast of Pentecost for the church as a whole and for us in particular, because it’s a day in which we’ve taken on board this extraordinary opportunity that we are given to carry the message of God into the lives of so many people - Many of whom would perhaps have never given it a possible thought that may be returning to some sort of practice of their faith to say “hey, you can do this, when you want, where you want, how you want and in this day and age, that’s not a bad invitation if you phrase it in those ways.

So, let’s pray that the spirit can enliven us and many others to bring this extraordinary opportunity into the lives of many people and hopefully it’ll be one of those things which people will never say, “it won’t catch on’. Our mission should to be accepted to make sure that it does catch on.