**KEV BATES’ FUNERAL MASS**

**Holy Name of Mary, Hunters Hill, 7 February 2024**

HOMILY NOTES

Michael Whelan SM

Pope Francis, addressing a group of newly ordained bishops in Rome on 14 September 2017, told them:

“As history teaches, the great Pastors, in defending the true faith, were able to dialogue with this deposit present in the heart and in the conscience of the faithful and, not rarely, were sustained by them. Without this exchange ‘the faith of the most educated will terminate in indifference, and that of the most humble in superstition’” (Cf. John Henry Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*, Morcelliana, Brescia 1991, 123).

The occasion for our gathering here and the Readings we have heard, remind us of how this can be.

Firstly, consider the Reading from John’s Gospel we have just listened to (15:1-5 & 9). The final sentence sums up the faith-filled life beautifully:

“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love”. “Abide in my love!”

The word “Christian” has become weary and wearying. I suggest this is due in, in part at least, to the sad fact that we have, too often, reduced Jesus and the Good News to a program for right behaviour.

In fact, the Good News is that we are loved by God! Jesus, present among us, is the embodiment of God’s love for us. Strangely, this most wonderful truth is easily forgotten. In his song, “Whispers”, Kevin reminds us:

Everybody has a story, Everybody has a song

Everybody has a people and somewhere to belong

But some have lost their story

Some forget their song

Some don't know where they're going to

'Cos someone else forgot to sing along.

Chorus:

*But there's whispers in their memory*

*Pictures from the past*

*What about the future?*

*"Come to me and rest" they'll hear at last*

Consider the words of St Paul’s Letter to the Christians in Rome that we have heard this morning(8:11 & 14-17):

“When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit”. God’s Spirit and our spirit are working together. Our task is to do everything we can to enable this to happen.

Kevin Bates was one of God’s whisperers! His very presence carried with it God’s invitation to each of us: “Will you let me love you!” Kevin was someone for whom the words of today’s Gospel and St Paul’s Letter, were very real.

Kevin embodied those four marks of the great Pastor that Pope Francis alluded to:

* He bore witness to the faith passed down from the Apostles;
* He lived a life of dialogue and was never self-serving;
* He listened to and nourished the faith already “present in the heart(s) and in the conscience(s) of the faithful”;
* His own faith was nourished by the people he served.

Those of us who knew Kevin have been privileged. He leaves us with a deep sense of peaceful completion as we continue our particular journeys. A life well lived. A task accomplished with magnanimity and good humour.

I can hear him singing God’s blessing on Maureen and Albie, Margaret and her family, Mick and Maree, Trish and Phillip and their spouses and children, us Marists, the Angels who cared so generously for him, all the parishioners of Holy Name of Mary parish, his teachers and his students, his friends and even those who never met him but loved him through his music:

Lord bless the place where I was born

And those who carried me

Lord bless the many smiles who have kindly set

me free

Lord bless the many little ones

Who've shown your face to me

You are my home and my joy.

(From “A Journey Remembered” by Kevin Bates SM)