

HOMILY – 21ST SUNDAY OF THE YEAR – 26 AUGUST 2018

Kenny Miller, recently left the job as Livingston Manager, another casualty of the world of football and all its trials. You wonder of all the football managers who left early from clubs, surely some of them would have gone on to be great. We quit too easily. We live in a society now of quitting, departing, short term thinking, canny hack it, bailing out – there is a lack of moral fibre and spiritual maturity, to deal with conflict and tension. I wonder how many marriages could have been saved if the spouses had more patience, mercy, wisdom and humility, to save their marriage. St Paul writes, in the Second Reading, “Give way to one another in obedience to Christ”. In other words, treat God as your arbiter, your advocate. Be guided by the Holy Spirit.

I have great respect for those who say to me, when asked, why are you getting married? “Because I love her and I want to spend the rest of my life with her, together”. There is something beautiful and inspiring about those who have the will, the determination, the perseverance, to see life through to the finish and whatever promises have been made, will be fulfilled.

In the course of priestly life, I’ve witnessed, possibly, up to 150 weddings. I wish it had been more but every time, the man and woman exchange their vows, a lump comes to my throat because it is an awesome moment, to commit yourself, entirely to another, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us part. It is a contract of marriage but more than that, it is a covenant of love. What is a covenant? It is a solemn or binding promise to God, that should never be broken. So, if we don’t really mean it, we should not be making it. It seals!!

St Paul says, “Husbands should love their wives, just as Christ loved the Church and sacrificed Himself for her to make her holy”. So, a real covenant or to put it better, a covenant of love, is made real when there is sacrifice. Not just sacrificing gold and silver, material things, but more importantly, time and ambition and self-pleasure, in order to be there for our spouse. The paid of sacrifice is often rewarded with many graces, think of Jesus and the Cross.

The pain of childbirth is rewarded with the cradling of the newborn in the arms of the mother and father. In a way, the covenant of love, in marriage, in society, in our careers and jobs, in the Church, is dependent on the willingness to make sacrifices. The alternative, greed and selfishness, leads to alienation, fear, anger and loneliness. Think of the worlds of Jesus, “Unless a wheat grain falls to the ground and dies, it remains a single grain but if it dies, it brings in a rich harvest”.

We often, in our fickleness, start with good intentions but then do not follow through. In the words of the Indian poet Tagore, “Today’s intentions, that are not seen through. I know that these are not untrue. All my deeds so long delayed, all the times I have not played, sound out on your violin’s strings, all performed by you”.

Jesus knows, in the Gospel, that many will promise to follow Him and will never desert Him but, in reality, many do give up or fall away. It is Simon Peter, who when asked by Jesus, “What about you, do you want to go away to?” responds boldly, “Lord, who shall we go to? You have the message of eternal life”.

So, eternal life is made sure to those who persevere, in the course of right, from this day forward, for better, for worse, in sickness and health, till death do us part.

I leave you with one parting thought re Kenny Miller and Livingston Football Club. Don't go through life blaming other people for your own failures, take a look at yourself and you will find the solution, from deep within you, so help me God.

Amen