

HUMAN FRAILTY – YOU’VE GOT TO LOVE IT!

Don’t you just love being out driving and observing the stupid behaviours of other drivers. They change lanes without indicating. They turn corners without letting you know which way they are going. They race through red lights, or drive too slowly and drive you demented in the process. Then a quiet voice next to you says, “It must feel great to be such a perfect driver!”

One of our favourite pastimes is finding fault with each other. We love it! Identifying and naming the shortcomings of another person gives us a delightful feeling of superiority, a renewed conviction that we are right and that our way of being in the world is really the one that works best.

When we are focussing on the foibles of another person, we are in a kind of competition with them to see whose way of life is less ridiculous.

Then when we are in competition with the other person, we assume that we have rights and values that the other person could not possibly have.

For instance belonging to a certain parish, having our kids attending certain schools, developing special skills in the arts, sports or other field of endeavour, could lead us to imagine that we are somehow essentially superior to those who do not belong or perform as we do.

There can be an unspoken belief that as our family lives in this or that suburb we have a not so subtle belief that we are somehow superior to those who live in other parts of the city.

In the very claiming of our superior spot in society, we are revealing our own eccentric foibles and ridiculous “values” for others to see!

We delight in finding fault in each other and without this enjoyable pursuit, our news bulletins and current affairs programs would have very little to report to us.

Many of the shows we watch for entertainment involve portrayals of people’s fault-lines, eccentricities and even their sins.

Then there are many of us who make a lifestyle out of obsessing about our own frailty. We spend countless hours inspecting, massaging, fearing our own shortcomings and inadequacies and keep many psychiatrists, counsellors, plastic surgeons and gyms in business through our all-absorbing need to escape our human condition!

It’s a truism that the things we enjoy poking fun at in other people are most often the very things in ourselves about which we feel insecure.

Our need to feel superior, our need to feel entitlement over and against another person, our need to be in control at the expense of another, could well serve as warning indicators of our own lack of freedom and peace.

Lent is a time for taking a good honest look at ourselves with a view to growing freer, truer and more loving. Lent involves an invitation to look at ourselves, each other in our families, our church, our wider society with a new degree of understanding, compassion and acceptance.

Lent is an invitation to live with, rather than compete with each other.

Lent reminds us to allow Jesus to speak with us as he calls us to forgive, to refrain from judging each other, to serve rather than to be served.

We can hear him sitting with us in our poverty and brokenness and calmly inviting us to allow love rather than fear to shape us.

Jesus comes to us precisely because we are broken. In the breaking of the bread at our Eucharist each day we can encounter his compassion, his acceptance and his longing for us to be fed by his love.

Let’s pray for one another that through this Lent we can say with St Paul, “I glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may be manifest through me.”

Then perhaps we can look at each other with new eyes!

Father Kevin Bates