

THE ART OF WHINGING

We all have things we want to complain about sometime in some sector of our lives. Complaining takes many forms and it's worth reflecting on the effectiveness of these various complaining techniques.

"Whinging" is a particular favourite here in Australia, although we prefer to think of others as being whingers, such as the well rehearsed "whinging Pom." Mind you there won't be too many whinging Poms after the most recent Ashes victory in Durham this week!

We Australians are every bit as adept at a good whinge as anyone else, and even when we are referring to others as whingers, it's usually we who are doing the whinging!

Whinging is a form of complaining which never really accomplishes anything other than the self-satisfaction of the whinger. In fact, whinging is all about the whinger, about a perceived injustice, about not getting one's own way, about a personal offence, real or imagined, about a system that they see as inflexible in their regard.

Whinging is often an attention-getting mechanism rather than being an agent for change. All that changes often enough, is the temperature in the room, the blood pressure of the whinger and the feeling of powerlessness and ultimate exhaustion on the part of the whingees! The whingees are often trapped when confronted with a long diatribe which is mostly about the whinger's lack of success—in marriage, in work, in romance, in sport, in finance.

For the whinger the fault is always on the head of another. The whinger will never or rarely speak to the person who is the target of her or his whinging, for then they might get a reply that discredits the whole basis of their whinging and they'd have nothing more to talk about. Their whinging is as much about wounded ego than actual damage done and so they have very little real data on which to base their case.

Whinging is one of our favourite forms of complaining so that nothing gets done!!

Another form of complaining is the much more productive process of critique.

A good healthy critique is focused not on the person making the critique, (although he or she may well be affected by the issue), but rather is focussed on the issue at hand.

The presenter of a good critique has reflected critically on the causes of a situation that calls for some resolution. This person has taken the time and trouble to investigate the circumstances around the issue and then comes forward with a clear statement of where fault lies.

If the person making the critique is really on the job, he or she will then provide an alternative, a possible resolution, and will present the case relatively free of the intrusion by the person's ego.

The person receiving the critique will be presented with a certain argument with which to engage and a process of negotiated change is given a much better chance of happening.

As we journey through the election campaign, listen carefully for the whingers on the campaign trail and those who produce solid critiques of government or opposition policy. At times it's hard to hear beyond the whingers.

Every family, every parish has its supply of people who critique and people who whinge.

It's probably true that at times we all whinge and at times we are capable of good critique.

Jesus speaks about dealing with the faults in ourselves before we have a crack at each other. Listening to him could probably improve our percentage of good positive critique and lessen our propensity to whinge.

Let's have a good week as we reflect on our own track record in this regard.

Father Kevin Bates