

WHY DO WE STAY?

In any family we have times of wondering how we manage to stay connected to each other. Sometimes we choose to jettison those connections, but just as often we stay and look for ways in which we can forge a future together.

In families we have siblings jealous of each other and seeking to claim moral high ground over each other.

In families we have people suffering from addictions or other illnesses who strain our financial, emotional and personal resources to breaking point.

In families we have people of differing political or religious persuasions and discussions are likely to end up in heated and angry debate.

In many of our families there are gay and straight people.

In many of our families we have long-lasting feuds or thinly veiled enduring ill feelings over grandma's will.

In most of our families there is someone "who has let us all down" in one way or another. Yet through all this, mysteriously, we manage to stay a family.

Woven through all the misadventure, dysfunctional behaviour, competitive relationships and pain, there is sometimes enough love to keep us together, still looking for the good in each other.

It is often through the turmoil and pain, that we learn understanding and wisdom and find a new kind of belonging.

In the family of the Church we are no different.

We're bigger and older than any Political Party, so it's no surprise that our politics are every bit as flawed and ruthless as these Parties, even as we claim to be people of the gospel.

We have the clerical in-fighting in the Vatican, decried by Pope Benedict last week! We also have people being disappointed by the Church for all sorts of reasons.

In the Church our dirty linen is hung out for everyone to see.

As the Royal Commission into Child Sexual Abuse proceeds, we can expect to feel great pain, shame, and become embarrassed to admit publicly that we belong to this family.

One understandable response that many people have chosen, is to abandon ship.

We could also choose to remain, realizing that like it or not, this is our family and that we are not leaving any time soon!

Having looked at our family and our Church community, we could then look in the mirror.

There we will probably see a mixture of grace and beauty, frailty and failure, humility and pride just as we found in family and church.

Sadly, many people who've looked in this mirror choose to give up on themselves.

Here too, there is another choice we can make, namely to look at ourselves with compassion and understanding, and take some steps to seek healing, hope and peace and draw on a new wisdom that can only be born when we face our darkness and pain.

It is into this mess of humanity that God's Word is born. It is here that we glimpse the unwavering love with which God looks at us. It is from here, in our muddled suffering world that we can rise to a new humanity, a new grace and build our families, our church and ourselves anew.

ABC 702's Richard Glover noted this week that it is only in recent times that we have come expect everything to be perfect for us: perfect service, perfect children, perfect parents, perfect church. The suffering that our various imperfections bring with them have always and will always be part of who we are and Glover thought it good that we get used to it!

And then Jesus joins in our reflection with: "I have come that you may have life and have it to the full". We can assume that he meant what he said and then dare to take him at his word.

Father Kevin