

Thirty - First Sunday of the Year (A) – Persevering in Faith

It is always upsetting when we learn of the failures of those in authority.

We read of examples in the newspaper or we see them on TV or hear about it when socializing.

Our own experience tells us that people fail all the time, and those in leadership positions are no exception. Bosses, judges, governments, religious officials, parents – all fall short in the just exercise of their duties, regularly.

Nonetheless we are shocked.

It is, of course, hard have the same regard as before for those whom we discover have morally erred.

It may well be that their actions were very wrong;
or it may be that we simply disagree with them.

Whatever the case, we are upset, we may bristle at it, or even be outraged.

How remarkable it is then that Jesus, when presented with the very poor example of the religious leaders of his day still called upon his hearers to continue to hold them in respect.

Their failures did not lead Jesus to reject their authority all together.

Now that *is* shocking.

Scandals in the Church are nothing new, since the Church is composed of sinners. There have always been shortcomings amongst members of the community of faith - and amongst their leaders.

That such a community with all its failings has endured to this day is a sign of the presence of God's Holy Spirit in it.

Sometimes the faults of the clergy have been used as a rationale to reject certain teachings, or cease to practice; or even to leave the Church altogether.

But Jesus asks us *not* to walk away.

It is salutary to remember that '**THERE BUT FOR THE GRACE OF GOD GO I**'.

Or to recall the old English Proverb:

PEOPLE IN GLASS HOUSES SHOULDN'T THROW STONES.

Or to bring to mind Jesus' other well known words:

Let him who has not sinned cast the first stone.

Maybe if we can observe the teachings of the Church in a spirit of humility and obedience to God, even if the teaching comes through fallible human leaders, we will still find Christ's words good to live by, challenging though they are.

It is the faithfulness of our forebears, despite all that they had to face, which has brought the Gospel to us.

And we have the responsibility to sustain a similar faith - in loyalty to Jesus, and through our perseverance at difficult times, for the sake of those who will come after us.