

## **HOMILY – 31<sup>ST</sup> SUNDAY OF THE YEAR – 5 NOVEMBER 2017**

In today's Gospel, Jesus encounters the Scribes and Pharisees, who are filled with pride. He uses the opportunity to highlight the dangers of mankind abusing its temporal powers.

In a sense, we can all handle pride, until our own pride is threatened. Just as we can all be patient until someone in front is keeping me back.

Even as children, we see to be superior to our peer group. You will know the nursery rhyme, "I'm the King of the Castle, get down you dirty rascal".

Our working lives encourage competition for status, Grade 1, Grade 2, C.O., H.C.O., H.E.O., in the Civil Service. In the army, Private, Sergeant, Lieutenant, Major, General. In the Church, Curate, Parish Priest, Monsignor, Bishop. Is life really about moving up a 'greasy pole'? Perhaps, like the Pharisees, we feel better when we dress smartly, be striking in our appearance. Is it still the case that our potential spouses are impressed by what they see? You all know the phrase, "Clothes don't maketh the man". It is the heart and soul of the person that matters most.

But, is that how we see ourselves? Jesus warns not to let our rank or office mask the truth about our inner being. Whether we are given the title Rabbi, Master, Father or Teacher. These titles are given on trust and often by solemn oath. In other words, that we are making a promise to be consistent between the outer appearance and the inner self. That we are truly willing to earn the respect and not bring our call or vocation into disrepute.

I remember a priest, who died 15 years ago, asked another priest to read out the message of farewell at his Requiem Mass. One apology he made or confession, was that the bigger cross he had to bear was carrying his own ego.

Let us listen again to the words of Jesus, "Anyone who exalts himself will be humbled and anyone who humbles himself will be exalted".

In other words, go about your lives quietly and devotedly, don't attract attention to yourself. Don't boast about your triumphs and let your way of life be the measure of the person. Don't assume the place of honour, rather elevate the lowly and make them know their presence is valued.

A deeper theological and spiritual question that I must ask myself is, "What is driving me or motivating my decisions? Am I always seeking to be in control? Do I really listen to my husband's or wife's point of view? Am I humble enough to pray to God for guidance about a life changing situation? Am I too proud to ask for help or go to Confession? Do I always cover up my mistakes so that no one can see them? Am I always worried about my reputation?"

I remember an older woman reminding her son of the dangers of having too high an opinion of himself. I think one of the strengths of the Scots is that though it is a proud nation, the people themselves are in the main, down to earth. In a humble way. That has not come about by accident. In the main, it is part of our ancient Christian heritage and our sociological background.

Let us hold on to that and allow faith in Christ to keep our feet on the ground and our eyes firmly set on the Kingdom of Heaven.

