

FR ALAN'S REFLECTION

CONFESSION WITH CONVICTION, NOT PERFECTION

How many of us would give the keys to our car to someone knowing that it was likely that they would smash it up? We would think anyone giving their trust in such a situation could not possibly be thinking straight. Yet essentially this is what Jesus basically did in today's Gospel. He gives Peter the keys to the kingdom of heaven knowing that Peter would mess it up. It seems that it did not take him long. In next Sunday's Gospel, which immediately follows this one, Jesus will rebuke Peter for failing to understand the true meaning of his mission. Peter will subsequently fail again around a campfire early on Good Friday morning where he would deny ever having known Jesus three times. But Jesus still does it. When Jesus gives Peter the keys to the kingdom, he is saying you are the one who is going to be in charge, you are the one who I am going to found my church upon. It begs the question, why? The reason is despite his weaknesses Peter genuinely loved Jesus and sought to know him, not just intellectually, but at the deepest level of his heart. He believed that Jesus was far more than a teacher. He truly believed that Jesus was the Son of God, the Lord of his life and he gave over his life to serving him. This was the foundation that Christ built his Church upon.

The question Jesus posed to his disciples is the same one for us today, who do we say he is? Do we truly believe that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God? Is he someone we know personally or is he someone we know because it was simply passed on to us by our parents? Is he the one I go to only when I am sick, or in trouble or when I need something? How hard do we try to genuinely get to know him? Is he the one I spend one hour with every week or every month but that is all? Or do I seek God out only at Easter and Christmas? If we operate on those levels, then we will never truly get to know him. If he is just another teacher, another good man then we are not completely giving over our lives to allow his power to completely take over our lives. Once we get to know who he is, once we can confess with conviction that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God, then despite whatever failures may happen to us as a result of our own weakness, Jesus can continue to establish the foundation of his Church because he can work in us and through us. Once we decide to make Jesus the foundation of our lives then whatever life throws at us will never overcome us.

Peter was sustained in his leadership of the early Church because he knew that despite his failings, Jesus still loved him. Even though we too may sometimes like Peter, abandon the Lord or deny him he still loves us, trusts us, and continues to offer us the keys to his kingdom.