**If anyone should cause one of these little ones to lose faith in me, it would be better for that person to have a large millstone tied round his neck and be thrown into the sea.** (Mark 9.42)

Millstones feature in the Bible in interesting places, as well as our TEXT. A few examples.

Deuteronomy 24.6: don’t take a man’s millstone as security – he needs it for grinding corn.

Judges 9.53: (cf 2 Samuel 11.21) a woman threw one down on Gideon’s son Abimelech.

Job 41.24: part of a description of a leviathan – heart ‘unyielding and hard as a millstone’.

In our TEXT it is the weight of a millstone that is noted. TEXT.
Imagine being thrown into the sea this way!

Not a very nice image.

Most of us with families have brought them up within the life of a church at least as children. Some of them have stayed, or have returned; but many have simply left, not to return. We, as parents, feel that burden. Where did we go wrong? Did we put them off? Did we not provide a good enough example?

As bad as we might feel, this TEXT is not about this, not really.

The TEXT is about someone, usually an adult, fully in the life of the church, having accepted the faith, but somehow through experience, or unkind words, or seeing a bad example, gives up a church connection.

If we have been in church life long enough we will have seen this happen too many times. It is always sad.

Of course it might be the person’s fault themselves (member who went to prison), not anyone else’s fault.

We might be able to pinpoint what happened, who said what, or did what? What attitude was expressed, what Bible verse misquoted, etc. We may know who caused all this, a whole church, a committee, a parson or person. It is always sad. TEXT.

Could this have been me? The burden is greater for a preacher or teacher. Like a millstone, it is heavy stuff.
It is easy to focus on God’s forgiveness and loving care – which is very real and true. But we also need to remember that we all have this awesome and scary responsibility, some more responsibility than others.

Radical surgery is needed! We can continue without one hand, one foot or one eye. Not easy though!

What radical surgery does God want within us? Jeremiah 31.33: **I will put my law within them and write it on their hearts.** Any surgery or procedure is difficult, not without risk and painful. True here too.

Let us ask not just for God’s forgiveness, but also a changed heart. This will be a slow process, but not without long-term visible results. Pray with me that each of us and the parish as a whole may think, act or speak in such a way that what emerges is a living echo of God’s tone.