

## THE GOAL THAT IS WORTH ANY SACRIFICE

Mark 9: 42-48: *"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe [in me] to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were put around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed than with two hands to go into Gehenna, into the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life crippled than with two feet to be thrown into Gehenna. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. Better for you to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into Gehenna, where 'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched' (Is. 66:24)"*

Christ is stressing the great spiritual harm caused by scandal and the importance of sparing no effort in giving good example so as to encourage others to avoid the occasions of sin. Jesus spoke of plucking out eyes and cutting off hands and feet to make it abundantly clear to live the virtues. Rigorous measures must be taken.

**CCC 1034:** Jesus often speaks of "Gehenna," of "the unquenchable fire" reserved for those who to the end of their lives refuse to believe and be converted, where both soul and body can be lost. Jesus solemnly proclaims that he, *"will send his angels, and they will gather... all evil doers, and throw them into the furnace of fire,"* (Mt. 13:41-42) and that he will pronounce the condemnation: *"Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire!"*

**CCC 1035:** The teaching of the Church affirms the existence of hell and its eternity. Immediately after death the souls of those who die in a state of mortal sin descend into hell, where they suffer the punishments of hell, "eternal fire." The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God, in whom alone man can possess the life and happiness for which he was created and for which he longs.

We may say quite simply to do God's Will is to be a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven. And if we take that and apply it to this Gospel passage, it will mean that it is worth any sacrifice and any discipline and any self-denial to do the Will of God, and only in doing His Will is there real life and complete satisfying peace.

It may be necessary to excise some habit, to abandon some pleasure, to give up some friendship, to cut out something which has become very dear to us, in order to be fully obedient to the Will of God. This is not a matter with which anyone can deal for anyone else. It is a matter of a person's conscience. And it means, if there is anything in our lives which is coming between us and perfect obedience to the Will of God, however much habit and custom may have made it part of our lives, it must be rooted out. The rooting out may be as painful as a surgical operation; it may seem like cutting out part of our own body; but if we are to know real life, real happiness and real peace, it must go. This may sound bleak and stern, but through grace we must acknowledge any sin which separates us from God.

**CCC 1431:** "Interior repentance is a radical reorientation of our life, a return, a conversion to God with all our heart, an end of sin, a turning away from evil, with repugnance toward the evil actions we have committed... it entails the desire and resolution to change one's life, with hope in God's mercy and trust in the help of His grace ..."