# “Sin”

In today’s second reading, sin is what James is talking about when he talks about social injustice and lack of concern about those who are in need. Similarly in the Gospel, sin is what Jesus is talking about when He tells us to cut off our hands, our feet, and pluck out our eye if they are going to lead us away from God and into eternal damnation.

Of course Jesus is using hyperbole to drive home His point. As He told us, sin does not originate from the outside of us but from the inside of us. The origin of sin can be found in our hearts. Our hands, feet, and eyes are tools to carry out what our minds and hearts desires of us. Sin is a decision to do something God has forbidden us not to do or a decision not to do something God has commanded us to do. Jesus tells us that if we want lasting happiness we must hold our relationship with God as more precious than any earthly thing we possess or desire.

Some of us would like to think that Jesus is soft on sin. However, when we reflect on His words in our Gospel today, we find out, to the contrary, Jesus is very definitive about the consequences of sin. We see that Jesus sees it as deeply scandalous when children are led into sin especially by those who are supposed to guide and guard them. While Jesus could be seen as merciful, gentle, and loving, He does not play around when it comes to sin.

Jesus emphasizes His point with regards to sin by pointing to those who would lead little ones to sin. When Jesus talks about little ones, He also has in mind those who are new to the faith or those, Paul would say at a certain moment, could only take milk instead of solid food.

Our Church is going through exposure of our past scandal with the revelation of several detestable sexual abuse of children and adolescents. The credibility of some of our Church leaders from the top to bottom are at a low. Our redeeming Jesus said, it would be better to tie a big rock around the neck of someone who leads one of God’s little ones astray! That does not sound to me as Someone who is soft on sin. Truly Jesus is forgiving and merciful when we repent however, Jesus does not consider sin as trivial.

The story of Adam and Eve in the Hebrew Bible is a prime example of the destructive nature of sin. Adam and Eve where created in a state of happiness living in peace and harmony with God. They sinned by listening to the tempter and the rest is history as we all know it. The story tells us that any sin especially a serious sin rupture our relationships with God, with one another, and with the rest of creation.

Traditionally, Scripture identifies seven deadly paths we human beings in our human nature like to take. Paths that move us away from the presence of God. They are Pride, Greed, lust, anger, gluttony, envy and sloth. These seven capital sins prevent us from having an encounter with God.

To counter the seven deadly sins the Church has identified seven virtues that the Holy Spirit gives us. *Humility, or poverty of spirit, is the opposite of* pride. *Generosity is the virtue that opposes* greed. *Kindness is the opposite of* envy. *Meekness is the virtue that helps us to control* anger. *Chastity is the opposite of* lust*. The cure for* gluttony is fasting. *Persistence remedies the sin of* sloth *or spiritual laziness.*

Sin can get hold of us and not let go easily. It reminds me of a story I came across recently. It is about a lamb that went astray out onto a frozen section of the Niagara River. The ice where the lamb stood broke loose and the lamb was stranded. An eagle saw the free lunch and got busy chowing down on the lamb. The eagle did not have to worry that the piece of ice was floating toward the fall because of its powerful wings since it could easily fly away at the nick of time. But when the ice flow came to the falls, the eagle discovered that it claws had become frozen in the ice and the eagle and the lamb went down the falls.

Similar thing happen to us when we flirt with sin. We tell ourselves we can quit anytime, but often we cannot. Sin becomes a habit and only God’s grace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation can help us overcome sin.

As we come to the altar to receive our Lord let us ask Him for some of the virtues we might be lacking in our lives. I know the virtues I will be praying for.