

Sin is not a private matter

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Sept. 28): (R3) Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48; (R1) Numbers 11:25-29; (R2) James 5:1-6.

Sunday's Gospel is about sin. Even though it is less fashionable to talk about sin, there are some things about sin that we ought to know.

Jesus was probably the most tolerant man who ever lived. John said to Jesus, "We saw a man using your name to expel demons and we tried to stop him because he is not of our company." That seemed to make sense to the disciples. But Jesus said, "Do not try to stop him. No man who performs a miracle using my name can at once speak ill of me. Anyone who is not against us is with us." To Jesus it was as simple as that — if you are not against him, you are for him.

The Gospel gets stronger. Jesus says, "If anyone causes a little one to stray, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a giant millstone fastened around his neck." Better to lose a hand or a foot or an eye if these lead to sin. There was one area where Jesus showed no tolerance. It was the area of sin. Sinners he loved; sin he despised. There were some things about sin Jesus wanted to say to us without equivocation.

The first is avoid sin. If evil is present, flee from it. If you are tempted, resist. You can't cozy up to temptation for very long. Before you know it, it will have you in its snare.

A young man came to a priest for counseling. He had some friends who were having a bad influence on his life. They took drugs and, in spite of his best intentions, he started taking drugs with them. He came to his pastor hoping he might have an answer. The pastor did, but it wasn't the quick fix he had expected. The pastor simply said, "Why don't you stop?" "I can't," the youth replied.

"What do you mean, 'You can't,'" asked the pastor. "Nobody forces



Father Albert Shamon

A word for Sunday

you to take drugs. No one puts a gun at your head and makes you take them. So just stop." "You know," replied the surprised youth, "no one ever put it that way to me before." He stopped and conquered the drug problem. What a lesson for us all. The pastor simply told him to stop, and he did.

Secondly, if you are tempting someone else to sin, it is even more imperative that you stop. It is one thing to be drawn toward sin, but it is almost unforgivable to drag someone else to sin.

The problem is that too often we think sin is a private matter. "It's my life," some will say. "I'll lead it as I choose." Life is rarely that simple. Everything we do has an impact on ourselves and on everyone around us. When we are dragged down into the muck and mire of life, we tend to drag others with us.

A final point: you and I are responsible for the little ones around us. So often when people do wrong, they do not think of the consequences for their families, for their reputations, for others who might conceivably be hurt by their actions. Life is not a game, if sin is involved. People get hurt, families get destroyed, lives are even lost because someone crossed a line that should never have been crossed.

It's a simple but important message from the Master. Avoid sin. If someone else could be hurt by your

sin, be even more determined to avoid it. Remember who you are. You are a follower of Jesus. You are a child of the King. You are one who has been bought by the blood of the Lamb. Jesus called us the salt of the earth. He said, "Good salt is worthless if it loses its saltiness; it can't season anything." So don't lose your flavor! We are called to take responsibility for those around us. In the same way that salt brings taste to a meal, we are to so live that we make everyone around us better people just by being in our presence.

Have you heard that said about an athlete? "When he's on the court, he makes everyone around him a better player." So the follower of Jesus should make everyone around him a better person.

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

Daily Readings

Monday, September 29
Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14 or
Revelation 12:7-12A; Psalms
138:1-5; John 1:47-51

Tuesday, September 30
Zechariah 8:20-23; Psalms
87:1-7; Luke 9:51-56

Wednesday, October 1
Nehemiah 2:1-8; Psalms
137:1-6; Luke 9:57-62

Thursday, October 2
Nehemiah 8:1-4A, 5-6, 7B-12;
Psalms 19:8-11;
Matthew 18:1-5, 10

Friday, October 3
Baruch 1:15-22; Psalms 79:1-5, 8-9; Luke 10:13-16

Saturday, October 4
Baruch 4:5-12, 27-29; Psalms
69:33-37; Luke 10:17-24

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