

## 26 B

These two guys were waiting for the pub to open. As they were waiting, a funeral passed up the street. One guy says to the other: "whose funeral is that?" "It's Joe Smith" his mate replied. 'Ah!, poor Joe', says the other guy, "do you know what he died of". "Well, I'm not too sure", was the reply, "but I don't think it was anything very serious".

We could be tempted to say the same about sin. But what Jesus is saying in today's Gospel is that the consequences of treating sin flippantly can endanger the salvation of our immortal souls. These days there are many people, even Catholics, who deny the existence of hell despite it being mentioned in the gospel today. Sr Faustina, the Polish nun, whom Our Lord appeared to in the 1930's, was given a vision of Hell. She said that most people who go there had denied its existence while alive.

Once, a man told St Padre Pio that he didn't believe in Hell. 'You will when you go there' was the saint's reply. All sin is an absence of love and it's a foretaste of hell to live in a loveless situation.

They say Yorkshire people have a reputation for calling 'a spade a spade'. Well that's what we must do with sin. Some people try to camouflage its reality by saying things like "I'm only human". To me, the person who is doing battle with sin is always more human and loveable than the person who has quit the fight. For instance if we abandon the struggle to forgive someone who has really hurt us we're less of a human being than if we forgive them. Some people try to mask the reality of sin by calling it by a different name.

Euthanasia, in the news a lot these days, is often described as peaceful release whereas it's ending a life considered by some to be not worth living. Some people consider shoplifting from a big store to be fair game because it's a big company and they

wouldn't miss it. Telling lies is often translated as being economical with the truth. So, we can rationalise away the reality of sin and even blame others for it but if not repented of, it remains in the soul of the person like a cancer.

The effects of sin can be contagious. We can pass on its bad effects to the next generation. Of course the same is also true of goodness and virtue. If Mum and Dad are married, for instance, there is a better chance of their children following suit than if they weren't married.

Jesus sternly warns us in today's Gospel about giving scandal to children and taking away their innocence. "If anyone is an obstacle to bring down one of these little ones who has faith, they would be better thrown into the sea with a great weight around their necks".

But the good news is that we can do something about sin. Some of the great saints of the Church were once great sinners but with the grace of God they turned their lives around. It would be regrettable to let the grace of repentance go a-begging. It's readily available for everyone who desires it.