

## 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 put our salvation in jeopardy. These days there are many people, even Catholics, who deny the existence of hell despite it being mentioned in today's gospel. St Faustina of the Divine mercy, whom Our Lord appeared to in the 1930's, was given a vision of Hell. 'Most people who go there', she said, had denied its existence.

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

They say Yorkshire people have a reputation for calling 'a spade a spade'. Well that's what we must do with sin. Some people say 'times have changed' and we were too hung up on sin in the past. However God hasn't changed and He didn't rewrite the gospel for our times. Some try to camouflage sin's reality by saying things like "I'm only human". But that can be a cop-out phrase for not taking sin seriously whereas the gospel today calls for drastic action. To me, the person who is doing battle with sin is always more human and loveable than the person who treats it lightly. For instance if we abandon the struggle to forgive someone, we're less human than if we forgive them.

Some try to mask the reality of sin by dressing it up as something else. Support for Euthanasia, for instance, which is gaining ground as we speak is often described as peaceful release whereas it's more like ending a life considered to be not worth prolonging. So, we can downsize the reality of sin and even blame others for it but if not repented of, it remains in the soul of the person like an untreated 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 their children will follow suit than if they weren't.

Jesus sternly warns us in today's Gospel about giving scandal to children and taking away their innocence which is not unheard of these days especially in the field of education. "The Lord says; "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 lived less than virtuous lives in their youth but with God's grace they turned things around. It would be regrettable to let the grace of repentance go a- begging. The mercy of God is readily available to all who seek it.