

**FATHER MARK SCHULTE HOMILY**  
**Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)**  
**September 26, 2021**  
**“Watch Your Step”**

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In today’s Gospel, there appears to be three principle focus points: (Mk 9:38-48)

- John seems to complain to Jesus that a man was casting out demons who was not of their company.
- Jesus warns against giving scandal and the severe penalty for doing so.
- And the admonition by Jesus to remove from yourself whatever can lead you into sin.

For the sake of brevity, let’s take a look at the second two points which seem to be somewhat related.

Sin is a very serious thing. It is serious because sin is an offense against God. Sin damages our relationship with God. Sin that is serious and persistent can potentially prevent us from entering into heaven. And so, Jesus gives His apostles a stern warning regarding sin.

In conjunction with avoiding sin, we are to also avoid all that can potentially lead us into sin, commonly referred to as “the near occasion of sin”. Some forms of the “Act of Contrition” refer to this.

Jesus said:

- “If your hand causes you to sin – cut it off.”
- “If your foot causes you to sin – cut it off.”
- “If your eye causes you to sin – pluck it out.”

It is interesting that Jesus does not mention the tongue in His list of body parts (Mt 5:37). Jesus is not making exaggerated hyperbolical statements. He is trying to impress upon His apostles the seriousness of sin and the need to avoid anything that could lead us into sin. In some countries they actually do this as a form of punishment. If someone steals something they cut off their hand. In the Mosaic law stoning was the punishment for adultery. Our modern sentiment views these practices as primitive and excessive.

Consider this:

- Our feet are a mode of transportation – we should not let our feet transport us anywhere the temptation to sin exists – bad movies – indecent night clubs/parties, etc.
- With our hands, we reach out for objects of various kinds. We make things with our hands, perform various acts with our hands, make gestures with our hands. When we steal, we take things and touch things with our hands. We should use our hands to bring blessing and glory to God. The Israelites at one point made idols with their hands.

- Our eyes – it is said that our eyes are the windows to our soul – therefore, whatever we view, look at, behold, has a direct effect on our soul. Only look at those things which draw our attention to God and His glory. (Phil 4:8)

Jesus makes a direct reference to Hell and how what we do with our body can either direct us toward heaven or lead us to Hell (Gehenna).

Dedicate your hands, feet, eyes, your entire body to God and his purposes. This is what the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph did.

The Psalm tells us, “Do not let sin rule over me.” (Ps 19:14)

- If you control your body, your body won’t control you.
- This begins by strengthening your spiritual life, practicing self-discipline.
- The language of Jesus in the Gospel expresses how serious He is about this.
- Consider your spiritual growth as serious business.
- Remove temptations to sin from your life as much as you can (honestly assess these temptations).
- Commit yourself to the virtues: faith, hope, charity, prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance. (CCC 1805, 1827)

If we strive to remove sin from our lives and live virtuously, we are much less likely to be the occasion of sin to someone else. Jesus warns His apostles against being a source of scandal. (CCC 2282, 2284)

Scandalizing someone else, especially the young and spiritually weak, is something that many people do not give a lot of thought to. But Jesus is very serious about this as well. “Better to have a millstone around your neck and thrown into the sea,” He said.

This admonition is especially directed to parents, priests, political leaders and other people in authority.

- Parents should ensure that their homes are places that their children can grow in holiness.
- They should monitor closely what their children are taught and exposed to in their schools.
- Make sure that their spiritual leaders are teaching solid Catholic spirituality.
- Don’t take anything for granted.
- Use proper language; don’t swear or gossip (the tongue).
- Vote for people who promote Catholic principles.

God wants us to take our spiritual development seriously, our eternal destiny depends upon it.

- Avoid what is evil.
- Associate with what is holy.
- Do your best to be a holy example to others.