

Homily: 26th Sunday: 2015: Cycle B: Nu 11: 25-29; Ps. 19; James 5: 1-6; Mk 9: 38-43,
45. 47-48
“Scandal”

Our world today focuses on the big headline scandals, e.g. priests and others going to jail for doing evil things and rightly so, but often times everyday ones are lost! A scandal is a sin with the additional dimension of causing someone else to stumble spiritually because of one’s bad example. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church puts it so well in relation to the broader community, “*Scandal can be provoked by laws or institutions, by fashion or opinion and by individuals. Therefore, they are guilty of the sin of scandal who establish laws or social structures leading to the decline of morals and the corruption of religious practice, or to social conditions that, intentionally or not, make Christian conduct and obedience to the Commandments difficult and practically impossible.*” (Does this sound like our world of today?). (CCC: 2286). As priests, teachers, and parents we must always be aware of the effect our actions have on the “little ones”: *esp. the children, young people and those who are easily lead astray by bad example*, as Jesus lays it out in the Gospel today - with the warning for those who lead them astray of a millstone and being thrown in the sea and ending up in the fires of Gehenna or Hell! Some sins fall into this category of scandal more than others. I want to briefly go through each of the 10 Commandments and look at how this scandal dimension applies to our daily lives. Remember we are all part of the Mystical Body of Christ and so everything we do for good or evil has an effect on others even when we are too much in a spiritual fog to see it; which can be the case! But we will see the real deal when we go before God. And let us heed Jesus’s kind warning about the reality of Hell in the Gospel.

1. When we put something or someone ahead of God, the people around us notice. Has our work or our hobbies been put ahead of God? Are sports more important to us than God? Overemphasis on physical health, money, sports, and work: all these things can become false gods in our lives and cause scandal to others.
2. Using God’s name in a disrespectful way as a swear word or expression of surprise. The little ones notice when we do so and are scandalized.
3. Skipping Mass to do other things or doing unnecessary work on Sunday, or never coming to Confession. The little ones see this and are scandalized. How sad it is

when we hear as priests from little children that their family doesn't bring them to Sunday Mass regularly because they had to go to a sporting event, on a hike, or a bike ride, or to the amusement park, or they had to sleep in because they were up too late - also skipping the Holy Days of Obligation because of other commitments or lack of planning. Is coming to Mass part of our schedule which we fit in only when it is convenient, or is it the foundation of our lives? **Little kids shouldn't have to remind us adults to bring them to Mass or bring them to Confession!** We make sure to take our children to the doctor when they are sick - what about when they sin, do we bring them to Confess to the spiritual doctor the priest who acts in the name of Jesus? Is it any wonder then, that when these same children become teenagers that they want to skip Mass regularly or stop going entirely as young adults , as well as forgetting about Confession? Bad example early in life is hard to overcome later on!

4. How do we treat our parents, if they are still alive? With respect and deference or do we talk down to them and the "little ones" notice? Do we treat the elderly with respect, or figure their time is past and there is no need to really pay attention to them? The most extreme example of this is the push for euthanasia in our culture.
5. **It is a huge scandal that abortion is legal in our society.** What are we doing to counter it?! It is a scandal as well that public officials who identify themselves as Catholics support abortion. A crazy example that I just saw today on a Catholic website: some politician who claims to be a devout Catholic drank the water from the glass that Pope Francis drank from yesterday - because according to him it was "holy water." I think that's kind of creepy and making an idol out of the Pope. By the way this same politician has a 100% pro-abortion voting record over the years. What a scandal! Do we vote for these people; or do we challenge them? Do we harbor attitudes of hatred, prejudice, meanness and racism in our speech and the little ones notice this prejudice and hatred flowing from us adults?
6. This is obviously a huge area of confusion in our culture: how we treat the gift of our bodies as Temples of the Holy Spirit or not. It is a scandal that young people tell me that "*it is expected, Father, that you will compromise your morals in dating relationships.*" How do we change that? One person at a time who goes

against the grain. It's a scandal that living together before marriage has become widely accepted even among Catholics, and yet there is a **50% higher chance** you will get divorced if you do so according to reliable social science research! It breaks our hearts as priests that parents often don't warn their children of this reality because they don't want to seem "old fashioned." And then of course there is the push in our culture, especially on television, to make the homosexual lifestyle and gay "marriage" normal, and yet Scripture says it is against God's teaching. How confused our young people are in this area. We must love everyone, but because we love them we must help them to live a life that is in accord with God's holy will as laid out for us in the Sacred Scriptures and the teaching of the Church- not by our narcissistic society.

7. Stealing: do we scandalize others by not giving an honest day's work for an honest day's pay? If we are an employer, how we scandalize others if we do not treat our employees with respect and justice and instead are seen as hard and even as a "slave driver," and yet they know we are Catholic! What a scandal!
8. False witness: do the little ones witness us gossiping and slandering others on a regular basis? This is a struggle for all of us to be consistently charitable.
9. Do we scandalize others by reading or watching things that are inappropriate, e.g., shows or movies on TV with lots of sex and violence, some of the adult romance novels and esp. books that are basically pornographic in tone. How young people are scandalized when they discover adults, secretly or not so secretly, looking at the evil of pornography. Often they start doing the same out of curiosity or because of the bad example of the adults in their lives. Please go to Confession and turn to the Lord for healing if you have fallen into this evil trap.
10. Coveting our neighbor's goods. Do we scandalize the little ones around us by being greedy, not sharing with those who are less fortunate - but instead blaming them for their misfortune? Are we always playing the materialistic comparison game with our neighbors, or do we honestly try to give much away?

May we all seek the truth in love, and ask God for the grace not to scandalize others through our actions, but instead more and more to draw others to the Lord's love and truth by all that we *say, think and do*. And then we won't end up in Hell. God bless you.