

**“If your eye causes you to sin... pluck it out!”** (Ouch!)

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

**Once upon a time**, there was a movie titled, **“A Man for All Seasons.”** It was about a man named Thomas, Thomas More, SAINT... Thomas More, to be precise.

So-o, **“What’s HIS story?”** you ask.

Well, **I’m glad you asked that question!**

*How’d you know I was going to say that? Oh, you’re getting so smart!*

*This, then, is his story:*

*Thomas More was a teenager in England when Christopher Columbus discovered America. (What year?) He attended Oxford University, after which he entered public life. He rose rapidly as a government official. In 1529, King Henry VIII honored him by appointing him Chancellor of England.*

*Then tragedy struck Thomas’ life. And, here’s how it happened.*

*Henry divorced his queen to marry his brother’s wife. This was unlawful, as well as in defiance of the Roman pontiff. To keep a long, entangled story short, Henry ordered officials of the state to sign a document, swearing that his 2<sup>nd</sup> marriage was lawful under the pain of treason & execution if they wouldn’t sign. (Henry wasn’t playing around!)*

*Thomas refused to sign; no amount of persuasion would change his mind. This precipitated a dramatic scene between him & Lord Norfolk. Finally, Norfolk exclaimed to his old friend:*

**“Oh, confound all this... I don’t know whether the marriage was lawful or not. But, damn it, Thomas, look at these names.... You know these men. Can’t you do what I did and come along with us, for fellowship?”**

*Thomas still refused. He wouldn’t swear to something he knew in his heart was wrong. Consequently, he was arrested. And, on July 6, 1535, he was executed (beheaded) for treason.*

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*I share that true story of Thomas More with you because it is a clear illustration of what Jesus means in today’s Gospel, which I just read to you from St. Mark’s Gospel:*

**“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! Better for you to enter the Kingdom of God with one eye than, with two eyes, be thrown into Gehenna....”** (i.e., Hell)

**Please realize**: Jesus isn’t actually telling us to cut off a leg or pluck out an eye! He is simply trying to emphasize an important point in terms of his day, which is this:

*His true followers should be willing to sacrifice whatever is necessary to keep from serious sin. They should be willing to sacrifice even what is most precious to enter into the Kingdom of God.*

*In More’s life, this meant sacrificing his life. Lest you think he found this easy because he was a saint, listen to these words of the ‘struggle in his soul,’ about which he wrote to his daughter:*

**“Dear Meg, I will not mistrust God, though I feel myself weakening and on the verge of being overcome with fear. I shall remember how St. Peter, at a blast of wind, began to sink because of his lack of faith, and I shall do as he did: call upon Christ and pray for help. And then, I trust, he shall place his holy hand on me and, in the stormy seas, hold me up from drowning.... And, therefore, my own good daughter, do not let your mind be troubled over anything that shall happen to me in this world. Nothing can come but what God wills. And I am very sure that, whatever that be, however bad it may seem, it shall, indeed, be best.”**

**Today's Gospel asks us this question:** How vigilant are we in avoiding sin...that is, avoiding anything that would cause us the loss of the Kingdom of God? After all, the rest of eternity IS... a very... long... time!

St. Francis de Sales says this on the matter:

**“Let the enemy rage at the gate, let him knock, let him push, let him cry, let him howl, let him do worse; we know for certain that he cannot enter... save... by the door... of our... consent.”**

**The point is**...we should be vigilant in guarding against sin, especially serious sin. So, when temptation to sin comes, & it WILL, we should recall the words of St. Thomas More to his Meg:

**“I shall remember how St. Peter, at a blast of wind, began to sink because of his lack of faith, and I shall do as he did: call upon Christ and pray to him for help. And then, I trust, he shall place his holy hand upon me and, in the stormy seas, hold me up from drowning....”**

I now close with these words from our ‘Office’ on certain Sunday evenings in the liturgical year:

**“At the name of Jesus,  
Ev’ry knee shall bow,  
Ev’ry tongue confess him  
King of glory now....**

**In your hearts enthrone him;  
There, let him subdue  
All that is not holy  
All that is not true;**

**May your voice entreat him  
In temptation’s hour;  
Let his will enfold you  
In its light and power.**

**Brothers (and sisters), this Lord Jesus  
Shall return again  
With his Father’s glory,  
O’er the earth to reign;  
He is God, the Savior;  
He is Christ, the Lord.”**

May our ever-powerful, ever-present, ever-perfect God, our Abba, bless you...

the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.