

## Dynamite Zone

One of my favorite hikes to do in the summer is Mount Yamnuska. The ascent is quite nice but my favorite part is the descent. Along the front of the Mountain, there is a ton of loose shale or small rocks and instead of walking down you can kind of ski or jump down. One time my friends and I were having so much fun sliding down that we missed the actual path through the trees further in, but we decided to continue going down and cut towards that path hoping to find it.

What happened was we ended up in the bushes with no path. For some reason there were fragments of stone all over the place and it began to rain. Eventually we reached a barbed wire fence and with a sign on the other side of it. The sign was facing the other way so after we climbed over the barbed wire fence we read the sign and it said DANGER! DYNAMITE ZONE!

*“Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is WIDE and the WAY is EASY, that leads to DESTRUCTION, and those who enter by it are MANY. <sup>14</sup> For the gate is NARROW and the WAY is HARD, that leads to LIFE, and those who find it are FEW.” (Mt 7:14).*

My brothers and sisters, I would be doing you an enormous disservice if I did not pass onto you the message of our Savior who not only told us about the way to the Kingdom of God but also the way to avoid hell. It would be akin to not warning you about the potential dynamite zone that you could be entering into.

For the world today says something the opposite of what our Lord says: for the gate is WIDE and the WAY is EASY that leads to LIFE but the gate is NARROW and the WAY is HARD that leads to DESTRUCTION.

**Therefore, I want to warn you of the two ways that can lead to the PATH OF HELL.**

In paragraph 1035 of the Catechism, “the Church AFFIRMS the existence of hell and its eternity.” She goes on to say that “immediately after death the souls of those who DIE IN A STATE OF MORTAL SIN descend into hell, where they suffer the punishments of hell, ‘eternal fire.’” Mortal sin can lead one to the DYNAMITE ZONE OF ETERNAL DEATH.

But what constitutes a mortal sin? 1) Full knowledge, 2) full consent and 3) grave matter. So if we die in a state of mortal sin WITHOUT REPENTING and ACCEPTING the merciful love of God, then WE separate ourselves from him for all eternity (cf. CCC 1033). Hell is a result of OUR CHOICE to reject God, and C.S. Lewis would say:

*“There are only two kinds of people in the end: THOSE who say TO GOD, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those TO WHOM GOD says, in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’ All that are in Hell, CHOOSE IT.”*

When Jesus speaks about hell, or in the Greek *Gehenna*, it was meant to evoke some very disturbing imagery. Gehenna referred to the Valley of Hinnom where the wicked kings of Israel

sacrificed their children with fire to the pagan God of Molech. Eventually it was shut down by another righteous king of Israel, and it became a garbage dump FILLED WITH BURNING WASTE and MAGGOT RIDDEN CARCASSES. This imagery was used by Jesus as the punishment for the damned.

With the Church's teaching in mind and this imagery, we can feel the force of Jesus' pleading for our conversion:

*it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell, <sup>48</sup> where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched.*

Jesus is clearly speaking in a hyperbolic way to get his point across, but in the Catholic tradition, we can speak NOT AMPUTATING OURSELVES but of AMPUTATING THOSE OCCASIONS OF SIN from our life which can lead us to hell. Near occasions of sin are not necessarily sins but by putting ourselves with certain PEOPLE, PLACES and SITUATIONS, our resolve against sin can WEAKEN and we CAN BE LEAD unto the path of mortal sin.

So if we were to translate Jesus' teachings into our modern day it could like this:

*If Netflix causes you to sin, cancel your subscription, for it is better to enter life without Netflix than to have Netflix and go to hell.*

*If your phone causes you to sin, get a flip phone, for it is better to enter into life without an iPhone than to enter hell with it.*

Jesus is calling us to a RADICAL CONVERSION that if ANYTHING was to get in the way of our love for him, then he is asking us to LET IT GO.

Therefore, let us heed the warnings of our Savior and tread the path he set out for us:

#### **Proverbs 10:17**

<sup>17</sup> He who heeds instruction is on the path to life,  
but he who rejects reproof goes astray