



Preparing for Easter

Receiving God's Healing and Strength

God gave us the Ten Commandments – His Laws of Love – so that we would know how to remain close to Him through placing the Lord first in our lives, and loving ourselves and our neighbor as He loves us. Sin is a departure from this call to *receive* God's love and *give* God's love. Guilt, shame and sadness may be felt in breaking God's Laws of Love because when we sin, we harm others as well as ourselves, and thereby we offend God, who loves us unconditionally.

Sometimes we sin deliberately; sometimes we do not intend to do so, but we find ourselves treating another person in a way that is hurtful. We can see how greatly we are impacted by the effects of Original Sin as there is an inclination or "pull" toward sin in all areas of our lives. We continually face temptation because of this reality. Temptation is an attraction, either from outside oneself or from within, to act contrary to right reason and the Commandments of God.

There are three sources of temptation: 1) the world – referring to everything about human life and society that is in any way opposed to God; 2) what Scripture calls "the flesh" – referring to our fallen human nature; and 3) the devil – a "liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44) who is a fallen angel and is the leader of the fallen angels who rejected God and became evil. The fallen angels lure and entice us to give in to evil and disobey God.

All human beings are faced with temptations to think, say or do things that are wrong. As long as we refuse to give into the deceptive suggestions, or temptations, there is no sin. It is only when we say "yes" and follow through with the temptation, that we actually commit a sin. It is essential to remember that God allows temptation but He is never the Author of it.

The steps of how we go from being tempted to actually committing sin can be listed as follows:

- A temptation arises from the world, the flesh, or the devil.
- We entertain the thought and then "toy" with it instead of immediately rejecting it.
- We begin to delight in the suggestion and yield to its attraction.
- We decide to move in this direction and actually choose to sin in thought, word or deed.

God gives us every help needed to be victorious over temptations, and to break sinful habits. These helps include daily prayer, reading the Word of God to fill our minds with the Truth, Christian fellowship, and receiving Jesus in Holy Communion every Sunday. These strengthen us to do the opposite of what the temptation proposes and to think ahead and avoid the near occasion of sin. We can choose to stay away from those thoughts, words or places/situations in which we find ourselves vulnerable to make a bad choice. Examples: A person addicted to sweets should stay away from the

candy aisle. A person being a poor steward of their time by spending an inordinate amount of time with technology should acknowledge it and set boundaries. A person that gets pulled into gossip should change the subject when the topic of conversation is anything that is not positive or helpful.

When we do commit sin, the Lord has given us the Sacrament of Reconciliation. By this Sacrament we are forgiven and receive the power of God's grace to help us overcome the confessed sins. There is nothing that we can do that is so terrible that God won't forgive us if we are sorry. It shows God that we really love Him when we tell Him we are sorry for having offended Him and want to be forgiven. He desires to forgive us, strengthen our friendship with Him and restore our peace and serenity of conscience. We will want to frequent the Sacrament of Reconciliation as it provides great hope for overcoming sinful habits.

Don't deny yourself this amazing grace, as we approach Easter. Jesus has obtained this grace for you, and me, not only to resist temptation, but the grace to receive His forgiveness when we fall. This amazing gift to us has been purchased for us at the price of Christ's Blood, shed in His Passion and Death and made available to us through His Resurrection! By Ann Lankford

