

Reflection Questions

- What challenges and temptations do you primarily face in your recovery journey today?
- How has God transformed your life in a way to protect and guide you in the midst of temptation?
- What plans do you have to seek renewal and virtue during this season of Lent?

CIR Phone Meetings Starting this Week

Meetings for men and women recovering from pornography and sex addiction

- Tuesdays, Wednesdays, & Thursdays
- 7:00 PM ET/4:00 PM PT
- Call-in phone number: (302) 202-1118
- Access code: 975396

Sunday Mass Readings This Week

1st Reading: Deuteronomy 26:4-10

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 91:1-2, 10-11, 12-13, 14-15

2nd Reading: Romans 10:8-13

Gospel: Luke 4:1-13

1st Sunday of Lent



We begin the season of Lent this week, starting with Ash Wednesday and spanning the course of 40 days of personal retreat to a spiritual desert. This aligns with the journey of Jesus Christ immediately following His baptism in the Jordan River where God identified Him as His beloved Son, with whom He is well pleased. During this season of renewal and cleansing, we seek to be strengthened in virtue by shedding the things that keep us from knowing, loving, and serving Jesus.

This week's Sunday Gospel reading sheds light on Jesus being tempted by Satan in the desert after fasting for 40 days. Bishop Fulton Sheen reflects on this passage and the nature of temptation by noting, "The defenses of the soul are seen at their strongest when the evil which has been resisted is also strong. The presence of temptation does not necessarily imply moral imperfection on the part of the one who is tempted." This is particularly true for those of us recovering from addiction or unhealthy sexual impulses which take root mentally, emotionally, and biologically.

Addiction takes hold in our lives as we believe the lie that something other than our Lord can bring us to fulfillment. What may begin as a pleasurable experience results in a mental obsession and physical cravings which we cannot relinquish on our own. By God's grace, we have encountered a solution and a fellowship with others who have found freedom from the cycle of sexual attachment and spiritual darkness. We can seek Jesus as our guide who knows the real human forces of temptation.

Our Gospel reading begins:

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, to be tempted by the devil.

As seen in this Gospel reading, our temptations can be categorized in three ways:

- those of the flesh (lust and gluttony)
- those of the mind (pride and envy)
- loving and pursuing other idols (greed)

One of these temptation highlights what we may face in recovery:

*Then he took him up and showed him
all the kingdoms of the world in a single instant.
The devil said to him,
"I shall give to you all this power and glory;
for it has been handed over to me,
and I may give it to whomever I wish.
All this will be yours, if you worship me."
Jesus said to him in reply,
"It is written: You shall worship the Lord, your God,
and him alone shall you serve."*

Many 12-step principles are woven into the story of Christ's temptation in the desert, and we can learn much about surrender in the most challenging moments of our recovery. For Jesus, the gesture of turning His will and life over to the care of God is not a one-time act. Rather, it is full of daily and momentary choices. Love and commitment is affirmed through these choices. When we were active in our addictions and unhealthy attachments, we had no choice and did not know freedom.

Through our baptism, we are given an identity as beloved sons of God. As we step further into our recovery, we are given opportunities to decide what that means to us as faithful Catholics. The devil—also known as *the father of lies*—would have us believe that we can inherit the glory of the world and may only find it through the empty lustful behavior we once knew.

Remember that we deal with the forces of evil—cunning, baffling, powerful, and patient. Without God's help, it is too much for us. Our commitment to Him and to our recovery must be done by surrendering all while asking Him to transform us, protect us, and keep us. May we find resolve and strength in the Lord during this season of Lent.