

Reflections with Sharon

Just say no

Read James 1:2-15

Temptation is one of those inescapable realities of life that makes equals of us all. Just by virtue of the fact that we are human beings, we will all wrestle with the desire to do things we know that are wrong and to not do things we know that are right. But temptation by itself is not sin; it is yielding or giving in to temptation that is sin.

Once we become aware of what can tempt us, we can't afford to remain passive if we expect to win. For starters, after we discover that going to certain places, hanging out with certain friends, listening to certain kinds of music, surfing certain websites, watching certain movies, reading certain books and magazines, etc., etc. will lead us down the wrong path; then we should avoid that source of temptation altogether.

I believe that even when we find ourselves unexpectedly thrown into a situation of overwhelming temptation, we can escape if we really want to. As we call out to God for help, we find that the same temptation that could have brought out the worst in us ends up showing off our strength of character as we fail to yield to it.

But we are not always able to predict where temptation will come from. We can fail in the area we believed was our greatest strength. That's why we must always be on the alert. We may not know ourselves as well as we think we do: then we allow ourselves one small taste of evil, and it brings about our downfall. And too late we learn the very high cost of sin the hard way: "Sin will cost us more than we want to pay; it will take us farther than we want to go; and it will keep us longer than we want to stay."

Over and over again we see the devastating results of yielding to temptation, but for some strange reason we always believe we will be the exception to the rule. We tell ourselves we could beat the odds so we toy with wrong doing: We lie and believe the lies that we tell; we feed on pornography; we steal and accept bribes; we get angry and impatient; we overeat and develop poor health habits; we neglect our responsibilities; we cheat on our spouses; we file false reports; we experiment with alcohol and drugs; we live lives of contradiction, forgetting that sooner or later, what is done in secret, always comes to light.

Then by the time we realize that the same rule that applies to everyone else also applies to us, the damage has been done; and we find ourselves having to experience the long, painful – and often times shameful – road to recovery; wishing in our heart of hearts that we had only had the courage to just say, "No!"