

February 19, 2021

Good Morning All,

First Friday of Lent! During the Lenten season we will again be journeying with our Savior by the Stations of the Cross on Friday evenings.

The Men's Club will sponsor a meatless Lenten supper in the Parish Hall at 5:30 PM. After dinner, there will be twenty minutes of music (6:40 PM) to settle our thoughts as we prepare ourselves for the journey. The music will be provided by our Music Director, Jerrad Fenske. The music will vary each week ranging from organ, piano and vocal selections. Stations of the Cross will follow at 7:00 PM. We hope that you can join us for food, music, and prayer to deepen and enrich your Lenten experience.

1. Today's Readings: [Friday after Ash Wednesday | USCCB](#)

2. ***The RE Corner with Jan Heithaus:*** We have been going through prudence and the daughter virtues of prudence. Here is an area where prudent behavior is very important.

What is an occasion of sin? Is knowingly entering into the occasion of sin, a sin in itself? If we know that doing something could lead us closer to the temptation of sin, must we stay away?

So why is it so important to avoid the near occasion of sin? It's protection for our souls—armor against evil and a barrier between us and temptation. We wouldn't set a plate of cookies in front of a 3-year-old and then tell him to not eat any. Likewise, we should keep ourselves away from situations that we know would bring temptation to sin. We're all weak, and because we're all weak and because it's easy to fall into sin if you're not careful, you have to have fences around yourself.

3. Quote of the Day: "Do not grieve over the temptations you suffer. When the Lord intends to bestow a particular virtue on us, He often permits us, first, to be tempted by the opposite vice. Therefore, look upon every temptation as an invitation to grow in a particular virtue and a promise by God, that you will be successful, if only you stand fast". *St. Philip Neri*

Study your responses to situations or your interactions with others to learn from each situation. Determine if there was an "occasion of sin" present that you could or did avoid!

St. Joseph, Pray for Us!

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Occasion of Sin

Is the occasion of sin itself actually a sin? Could it be a sin sometimes? And, sometimes not? Does it depend on how proximate the occasion of sin is?

Defining “Occasion of Sin”

Let’s look at the phrase “occasion of sin.” Here is how Venerable Fr. John Hardon defines it in his Modern Catholic Dictionary:

Any person, place, or thing that of its nature or because of human frailty can lead one to do wrong, thereby committing sin. If the danger is certain and probable, the occasion is proximate; if the danger is slight, the occasion becomes remote.

In other words, an “occasion of sin” is a situation that makes it easier for me to *commit* sin. An example will help illustrate this. Let’s say I have a habit of gossiping about people, talking behind their backs. Let’s say God gives me the grace to repent from that sin, to confess it, and to feel a strong desire to break that habit. In order to do so, it will help if I avoid situations that tend to encourage gossip (those situations are the “occasions of sin” we are considering). Maybe having lunch at the tennis club is a situation where gossip tends to rule the conversation. Or maybe going out for drinks with the guys after work is a situation where we all tend to get loose-tongued and say damaging things. Avoiding lunch at the tennis club and going straight home after work could be wise choices. They would help me avoid situations (occasions) where I tend to give in to the temptation to gossip.

Avoiding Occasions of Sin

Now we are ready to tackle your question: “Is the occasion of sin itself actually a sin? Could it be a sin sometimes?” As you can clearly see, an occasion of sin is not in itself a sin. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with going out for drinks with the guys after work. There is nothing intrinsically wrong in having lunch with buddies at the tennis club. Those are perfectly normal, healthy activities. But if I know clearly that, for me, going to lunch at the tennis club will put me in moral danger by putting me in a situation in which I will probably start gossiping, then I should avoid doing so whenever possible. If I know that something or someone is going to lead me into sin, I have an obligation to make a reasonable effort to avoid that something or someone. If I don’t, I am already saying – through the choice to enter into an easily avoidable and very clear occasion of sin – that I am willing to flirt with that temptation, I am already playing with fire.

Being Reasonable

The key here is to know what situations, activities, and relationships are helpful for my friendship with Christ, and which ones are harmful. Sometimes, I cannot avoid situations that may end up being harmful – it's unreasonable to think that we can isolate ourselves from every sort of temptation. But in those cases where I can easily avoid something that I know will be a very strong temptation for me, I need to do what I can to avoid it. When I don't, I become, in a certain sense, responsible for putting myself into an occasion of sin, which contributes to my responsibility for falling into that sin if indeed I do fall. In those cases, it could be considered a sin – an act of disobedience to God, a decision to distance myself from God's will and from what is truly good for me – to purposely enter into an easily avoidable situation where I know I will likely give into temptation.

With those examples and that clarification, you may find Fr. Hardon's further elaboration helpful:

It [an occasion of sin] is voluntary if it can easily be avoided. There is no obligation to avoid a remote occasion unless there is probable danger of its becoming proximate. There is a positive obligation to avoid a voluntary proximate occasion of sin even though the occasion of evil-doing is due only to human weakness.

Forging Ahead

I hope these distinctions help you understand how we can sometimes be responsible for putting ourselves in moral danger, and how choosing to do so can sometimes – but certainly not always and everywhere – be considered a sin itself. Nevertheless, the most important thing to keep in mind is not what we need to avoid, but what we need to do. If our hearts are full of a desire to know, love, and follow Christ, the Holy Spirit will fill our minds with ideas about positive steps to take for our own growth in holiness and for furthering the Church's work of evangelization. When we shift into that gear, avoiding moral danger becomes second nature, and scrupulosity loses its sting.

Source: catholicexchange.com by Fr. John Bartunek, LC