



*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Hebrews 4:15*

Right after His baptism, our Lord was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He was tempted first to doubt that He indeed is the Son of God, and furthermore to doubt the Father's provision for Him. He was then tempted to ambition and worldly glory of His own, by choosing His own cross to bear and overcome. And note that the devil did this by falsifying Scripture in his attempt to mislead. Finally, He was tempted to power and dominion without having to endure the Cross, by bowing to Satan. He overcame each of these temptations by returning to His Word, properly read, understood, and cited, and the Holy Spirit was right there with Him.

When faced with an unplanned (by you, that is) crisis pregnancy, you might be tempted to think of your baby not as a blessing from God, but as a curse. You might doubt that He will take care of you both, even if the economics appear bleak. You might be on the path to success in your schooling and/or career, and see the baby as an obstacle, namely a cross, rather than as a blessing. You might thus be tempted to abortion. You might be faced with an illness that is chronic, with much suffering, and no end in sight, or one that is terminal. You might be tempted to choose to die on your own terms, rather than wait with patience until God calls you back to Him. Or you might be tempted to help someone so-afflicted die on his/her terms rather than waiting patiently on God. These are just a few examples of ways you, or any of us, might be tempted to sin.

Any time you experience sinful temptation, know that God is with you and sympathizes, namely, *suffers with*, you! He invites you to approach Him in prayer. If you are overwhelmed, you may simply use the words that Jesus has given you, namely the Lord's Prayer, knowing that these petitions come with promises from God! If you are even too overwhelmed to pray that, you may simply, and in faith, let out a sigh, knowing that the Holy Spirit will fill in the blank (Romans 8:26). And the Spirit, through your pastor and fellow Christians, will lead you back into your own study of Scripture, to reorient your thinking. Know also that if you have yielded to your temptation, our God of life will not leave you dead in your trespass. With repentance, there is forgiveness at the foot of the Cross. Your pastor is there to hear your confession and absolve you as Christ has commanded him to do.

As you look toward our Lord's Passion and Crucifixion, remember that He loves you so much that He endured all of this for you so that you might be saved and spend eternity with Him in pure bliss. Your English District Lifeline Team prays God's richest Lenten blessings on you, your families and congregations.

*Afterword:* If your loved one was a Christian who chose *Medical Aid in Dying*, or euthanasia, out of despair, know that he/she was known by our Good Shepherd, and that you may rest in His mercy. For more on suicide, we commend Rev. Peter Preus, *Permission to Grieve for the Suicide*, which may be downloaded at <https://files.lcms.org/file/preview/F56C19C6-BCA7-4AE8-B24C-92C94395D59D?host=resources.lcms.org%2Freading-study%2Flife-library-suicide-articles%2F>.