In legal parlance, there are two different sorts of crimes. If you watch police shows you may have heard of 'misdemeanors' and 'felonies.' A misdemeanor is a lessor crime, punishable by less than one year in jail; and a felony is a greater crime, punished by more than a year in jail. There is a third sort of crime, treason - which is often punishable by death.

Today is the First Sunday in Lent, and the readings deal with sin. Many of us will remember venial sins, and mortal sins - which are a bit like misdemeanors and felonies. Venial sins were the small habitual things that were more like "oops" moments. And mortal sins were where we knew something was wrong, but we eventually cracked under the pressure and gave in to temptation.

Today's Gospel is about the Temptations of Jesus.

In the first temptation, the devil tries to get Jesus to turn a rock into a loaf of bread. No big thing, right? More like a party trick than a sin. But in this, Satan was testing to see how much he could get away with. Jesus stands up to the temptation, quoting Scripture to push back against the devil. Misdemeanor or not … venial sin or not … Jesus remains sinless.

In the second temptation, things get stepped up a notch or two. This time, it's a bigger miracle. Jump off a tall building and make God send angels to protect you. This time, it's more like a Vegas Revue. Break out the big guns, and show us what you're made out of. And *this time*, the devil quotes Scripture - mocking Jesus' use of the Word of God. Yet even in the face of this felony … this mortal sin … of abusing His power … His divine Sonship to show off … Jesus resists and remains sinless.

And then the final temptation, Satan goes for the gold. He offers Jesus everything in the world if He will only turn His back on God and worship Satan … the Creator showing homage to the Creature. I'm saying that this falls under treason - jumping ship … siding with the bad guys … aiding and abetting the enemy. And this time, Jesus sends the devil away … Our Lord is victorious over temptation and sin.

All three of the temptations the devil uses to trap Jesus all began with the word "If" … "**If** you are the Son of God."

Satan uses this sort of strategy on us all the time. "If you were a real man" … "If he really loved you" … "If she were more attentive" … "If this company paid me what I'm worth" … "If you were a better person" … "If you were thinner, younger, taller, older" … and then after setting us up, the devil holds us back … or slips in the bad idea … and then … BAM! … we're hooked in sin … we've bought the lie.

And just like in the real world, there are "entry level sins" that lead to more serious sins.

But look out for those pesky "**if's**" … because they are all lies.

The devil also uses lies and half-truths to tempt and confuse us - like we heard in the First Reading. And remember that sin is contagious … as St. Paul reminds us. And we're all susceptible to catching it … like a spiritual flu … or a bad cold … that keeps going around.

Jesus has saved us from sin. God indeed loves us.

You are the person God created for greater glory.

You have been redeemed by the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ.

Know that … believe that … live that.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus let us recognize that we are all in this together … and that we are all susceptible to sin and to sinning … and in that, we are all in need of a Savior … and that Savior is the Person of Jesus Christ.

Let us lean on the graces of our Baptism and Confirmation … let us lean on the graces of Confession and Anointing … let us lean on the graces of Matrimony … of Ordination … and tapping into the power of God … and the infinite graces of the Eucharist … let us pray for ourselves … let us pray for each other … May we stand up to sin and temptation, with Jesus fighting at our side … and with renewed trust in God's mercy and God's love … Let us conquer sin with Christ as our Defender and Redeemer.