

Phones, Sin, and Vigilance

Father Bob's Homily – 10:30 AM Mass
Sunday, February 15, 2026

Have you ever considered your cell phone to be a near occasion of sin? At a previous Mass, someone immediately shouted out, "Yes!" — and I jokingly told her she could turn off the rest of the homily because she already understood the point.

A cell phone is not sinful in itself. But how we use it can easily become a near occasion of sin. Our phones and the internet make sin incredibly accessible. They sit in our pockets and handbags, always within reach.

In today's Gospel, Jesus speaks about serious sins — anger, lust, and falsehood. Let us consider how our cell phones can become near occasions of these sins.

Anger

Anger can be a serious and destructive sin when it is not managed properly. The internet makes it very easy to act on anger. When we are upset, we can go online and "vent." That venting can quickly turn into bullying, gossip, attempts to damage someone's reputation, or saying cruel and hateful things. From a Catholic moral perspective, these actions are sinful.

Online, it is easy to hide behind a screen. It can feel as though there are no consequences. But there are consequences. People have lost jobs and damaged relationships because of something posted in anger.

Jesus calls us to manage our anger before it grows into something worse. We must be especially vigilant because the internet lowers our inhibitions and increases our impulsivity.

Lust and Pornography

Jesus also speaks about lust. Today, pornography is one of the great moral crises of our time. It is widespread, highly addictive, and extremely destructive. The accessibility of smartphones has made pornography available almost instantly and privately.

Lust is a disordered sexual desire. It objectifies people and undermines the dignity and holiness of human sexuality. It often begins in the imagination — what St. Teresa of Ávila called "la loca de la casa" — "the crazy one in the house." If we do not guard our imagination, it can lead us into serious sin.

The pornography industry generates enormous revenue — larger than many professional sports leagues combined. It is powerful, pervasive, and designed to hook users.

If someone is struggling with pornography addiction, there is help. Recovery involves real work: therapy, the sacraments — especially Eucharist and Confession — spiritual direction, and accountability. Addiction rewires the brain, but with grace and effort, it can be rewired toward healing. If

you need resources, please contact the parish office.

Truth and Falsehood

Jesus also speaks about truthfulness. When He says, “Do not swear,” He is not referring to profanity. He is speaking about swearing oaths by God to prove honesty. Jesus teaches that we should be so truthful that we do not need to swear by God for people to believe us. Our word should be enough.

On the internet, much of what we see is not true. There is deception, manipulation, exaggeration, and outright falsehood.

We even see examples of “deepfakes,” where someone’s image or likeness is digitally altered to make it appear they said or did something they never did. This has happened even to bishops.

Therefore, when we are online, we must be vigilant about what we consume, believe, and share.

Privacy and Our Young People

Our young people are often encouraged to share everything about themselves online. But Catholic morality does not require us to share everything with everyone.

We are not obligated to reveal every detail of our lives to all people at all times. That does not make us deceptive. It means we understand the value of privacy and personal dignity.

Each of us should have a sacred interior space — something reserved for God and not exposed to the entire world.

A Call to Vigilance

Cell phones are not evil. They can be wonderful tools. I am not telling you to throw them away.

But I am asking all of us — myself included — to raise our awareness.

Our phones make certain sins very accessible: anger, lust, and lies.

As we prepare to enter the Lenten season, let us ask ourselves:

How vigilant am I when I am online?
Am I being led into sin — or guided by God?

May we use these tools wisely, with discipline and with grace, so that even in the virtual world, we remain faithful to Christ.