Ash Wednesday

Avarice (Greed)

"Remember the sufferings of Christ, the storms that were weathered... the crown that came from those suffer ings which gave new radiance to the faith... All saints give testimony to the truth that without real effort, no one ever wins the crown. "

St. Thomas Becket (1118-1170)

At the age of 36 while Thomas was archdeacon of Canterbury, he was made chancellor of England by his friend King Henry II. As chancellor of England under Henry II, Thomas Becket became obscenely wealthy. His wardrobe was larger and more expensive than the king's. He even had his own private navy. In spite of all his wealth, Becket was cold-hearted and never gave anything to the poor

When King Henry felt it advantageous to make his chancellor, Thomas, the archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas gave him fair warning: he might not accept all of Henry's intrusions into Church affairs. Nevertheless, in 1162, he was made Archbishop, and resigned his chancellorship.

After Thomas was consecrated archbishop of Canterbury, he reformed his whole way of life. He gave away all his possessions. He welcomed the poor at his table. And he became a champion of the independence of the Church. Thomas rejected the constitutions and fled to France for safety and remained in exile for seven years. When he returned to England, he suspected it would mean certain death. Because Thomas refused to remit censures he had placed upon bishops favored by the King. King Henry cried out in a rage, "Will no one rid me of this troublesome priest?" Four knights, taking his words as his wish, murdered Thomas in his own cathedral in Canterbury.

One of the seven deadly sins is Avarice or Greed and its false God is security in things apart from God. We have moments in our lives when we can become very greedy and seek to find our security in wealth or possessions rather than in God. St. Thomas Becket at first followed the false God of security in wealth rather than finding his security in God. How have you sought your security in wealth or possessions rather than in God?

For your prayer

St. Thomas Becket would have prayed with Matthew 6:1-6. Use your imagination and reflect on moments when you struggled with greed and did not want to share your wealth with others. As you pray with Matthew 6:1-6 reflect on how God is inviting you to give alms during this Lent to help those in need.