Saturday of 1st Week of Lent

EXCESS

"It is almost certain that excess in eating is the cause of almost all the diseases of the body, but its effects on the soul are even more disastrous." - St. Alphonsus Liguori

ST JOHN BAPTISTE DE LA SALLE

St. John de La Salle came from a noble French family in the seventeenth century and was used to a comfortable lifestyle. He was used to having more than he needed and so was raised in excess of what he needed. After being ordained a priest at twenty-seven, he was assigned to the prestigious city of Rheims ---a sign that his life in the Church could well be one of privilege and dignity. It seemed like the pattern of excess he had experienced would continue into the priesthood.

However, God opened John's eyes to the realities faced by poor children: insufficient food, clothing, and above all, a lack of education. John was touched by the hunger and thirst of these children and felt called to respond, even though the ministry of working with children was at first unappealing. It made him uncomfortable to see such lack after he was so used to seeing such excess. John eventually chose to give away his share of the family fortune and having received permission to leave Rheims, gathered a group of young men to teach the poor. This group of young men became the origin of the Christian Brothers. The Christian Brothers are dedicated to serving those who lack food and drink by never living in excess themselves. John's early life of self-indulgence became a life of service. He chose to give of his excess to feed and fill others rather than filling himself.

We are usually so unaware on a daily basis just how blessed we are. There are plenty of children in the world who do not have enough to eat or drink yet most of us can eat or drink to excess. Gratitude is a great remedy to excess because we become more in touch with what we really need to meet our needs. It is important for us to examine our food and drink intake to really reflect on if we are exceeding our needs. When we fast then we become more in touch with what we really need and learn that it really takes less to keep us going then we first thought. We can then take the excess we have identified in our lives and share it with those in need. How do you eat or drink to excess on a regular basis and how can you use fasting and almsgiving to become more in touch with what you really need?

For your prayer

St. John would have prayed with Deuteronomy 26: 16-19. Use your imagination as you slowly read Deuteronomy 26: 16-19. Please reflect on what agreements God is inviting you to make in not eating or drinking to excess. Reflect on God's desire to provide for the needs of others through the excess that you have been given.