Thursday of 1st Week of Lent

CONSUME

"Take even bread with moderation, lest an overloaded stomach make you weary of prayer." – St. Bernard of Clairvaux

ST JOHN XXIII

St. John XXIII birth name was Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli. He was known for fine dining and before he became a pope as having one of the finest tables in Europe. One can see in pictures of him, how much he struggled with his weight. There would be moments where thoughts of consuming food or drink would bring distractions in prayer. As Pope John XXIII, he immediately began to change the culture in the Vatican. On Christmas, 1958, he resumed the papal practice of making visits to the community within the official Diocese of Rome. He visited the sick, the poor, and prisoners. He apologized for episodes of anti-Semitism within the Church carried on by some of his predecessors.

It was originally expected that Pope John XXIII would only serve a short time before passing away and that he would make no significant changes to Church practice. However, Pope John XXIII was a man of great mercy and kindness. Perhaps his most influential decision was the call for an ecumenical council which would be known as Vatican II. As a result of this council, many practices of the classic Church would be altered with a new emphasis on ecumenism and a new liturgy. He was, like his own sister before him, diagnosed with stomach cancer, which was a terminal diagnosis for that time. Just as Pope John XXIII once consumed so much food, he now found himself consumed by cancer. In his last months, he offered to negotiate peace between the Soviet Union and the United States, then at the height of the Cold War. The offer, although declined, was popular in both countries. In the wake of the news, John XXIII was the first pope to be honored as the Time Magazine Man of the Year. By the end of his life, food and drink no longer consumed his interests as before.

Sin is a cancer that will consume us if we allow it to continue growing within us. It can be tempting to continue consuming our favorite foods or drinks until we find them consuming our time and interests. Many find their time in mass or prayer consumed with thoughts of food or drink. When we fast then we choose to stop consuming and allow God to consume us. Do you believe that God can consume the sin of your life through his mercy and so end the cancer ravaging your soul?

For your prayer

St. John XXIII would have prayed with Matthew 7: 7-12. Use your imagination as you slowly read Matthew 7:7-12. Please reflect on the mercy and grace that God desires to give you if you open the door to God. Now imagine giving God permission to open the door of your heart and satisfying every desire of your heart.