Saturday of 5th Week of Lent

HALT

“The devil is afraid of us when we pray and make sacrifices. He is also afraid when we are humble and good. He is especially afraid when we love Jesus very much. He runs away when we make the Sign of the Cross.” - St. Anthony the Abbot

ST ANTHONY THE ABBOT

St. Anthony the Abbot struggled at one point in his life with sloth when he allowed the Devil to temporarily halt him. The devil fought Anthony by afflicting him with boredom, laziness, and the phantoms of women, which he overcame by the power of prayer. After that, Anthony moved to a tomb, where he resided and closed the door on himself, depending on some local villagers who brought him food. When the devil perceived his ascetic life and his intense worship, he was envious and beat him mercilessly, leaving him unconscious. When his friends from the local village came to visit him and found him in this condition, they carried him to a church. For a time he was halted in his spiritual growth and struggled to continue going forward because he felt stopped for a time in his efforts toward God.

After he recovered, he made a second effort by living in a strictly enclosed old abandoned Roman fort for some 20 years. The devil again resumed his war against Anthony, only this time the phantoms were in the form of wild beasts, wolves, lions, snakes, and scorpions. They appeared as if they were about to attack him or cut him into pieces. But the saint would laugh at them scornfully and say, "If any of you have any authority over me, only one would have been sufficient to fight me." At his saying this, they disappeared as though in smoke. One day Anthony emerged from the fort with the help of villagers. They had expected him to have wasted away or to have gone insane in his solitary confinement. Instead, he emerged healthy, serene, and enlightened. During his time in the fort he had learned how to no longer allow the Devil to halt his advance towards God and taught others how to not become halted in their journey towards God.

The deadly sin of sloth can cause us to feel halted in our progress at times. Events and sins happen in our life that discourage us so greatly that we feel we cannot go further or shouldn’t try again. The devil wants to use sloth to halt our advancement to God and will try to blind us to the progress we are making towards God. Sloth seeks to make us forget our progress towards God and so discourage us. The moments we feel like the least progress has been made are usually when the greatest progress has happened. How have you felt halted in your spiritual growth by forgetting the progress you had made?

For your prayer

St. Anthony would have prayed with John 11:45-56. Use your imagination as you read John 11:45-56. Please reflect on how the Jewish leaders tried to halt Jesus mission but how he continued. Reflect on how evil has tried to cause you to halt in your life from growing closer to God and kept you from your true mission in life.