Tuesday of 5th Week of Lent

COMPLAIN

"For mental prayer in my opinion is nothing else than an intimate sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we know loves us. The important thing is not to think much but to love much and so do that which best stirs you to love. Love is not great delight but desire to please God in everything." – St. Teresa of Avila

ST TERESA OF AVILA

St. Teresa of Avila struggled for part of her life with sloth through a complaining which allowed her to avoid her faults. When she was seven-years-old, she convinced her older brother that they should "go off to the land of the Moors and beg them, out of love of God, to cut off our heads there." They got as far as the road from the city before an uncle found them and brought them back. She then complained about not getting the chance to go. As a teenager, she was someone who complained a lot. When she was 16, her father decided she was out of control and sent her to a convent. At first she hated it but eventually she began to enjoy it -- partly because of her growing love for God, and partly because the convent was less strict than being with her father. The convent she had joined was very worldly and not focused on God. Many of the sisters liked to gossip and complain about others rather than focusing on their own sins. It was easier to point out the sins of others rather than confronting one's own sinfulness.

Later Teresa fell ill with malaria. When she had a seizure, people were so sure she was dead that after she woke up four days later she learned they had dug a grave for her. Yet instead of helping her spiritually, her sickness became an excuse to stop her prayer completely: she couldn't be alone enough; she wasn't healthy enough, and so forth. She used excuses and complaining to shield her from the truth that she only knew how to talk with God through complaining. A good spiritual director helped her to really start praying by really sharing herself with God. She started to confront her sinfulness rather than making excuses for it. This helped her become the saint God had created her to be.

The deadly sin of sloth involves us complaining and making excuses to avoid responsibility for our actions and sinfulness. We all can fall into the trap of complaining where we make excuses for our actions by putting the blame elsewhere. The blame can fall on anyone else, even God, as long as it does not fall on us. It is easy for us to avoid responsibility by complaining and shifting the fault. However, only by acknowledging the fault can we grow and become holy. How in your life have you complained about others and made excuses to avoid responsibility for your faults?

For your prayer

St. Teresa would have prayed with Numbers 21:4-9. Use your imagination as you slowly read Numbers 21:4-9. Please reflect on how the Jews complained against God because of the challenges they faced in the desert. Reflect on how you have complained against God when your life became challenging rather than thanking God for blessings.