Tuesday of Holy Week

UNFORGIVENESS

"Take pains to refrain from sharp words. Pardon one another so that later on you will not remember the injury. The recollection of an injury is itself wrong. It adds to our anger, nurtures our sins and hates what is good. It is a rusty arrow and poison for the soul. It puts all virtue to flight." - Saint Francis of Paola

ST JAMES

James, the son of Zebedee and the brother of St. John, is called St. James the Greater (so as to distinguish him form the other apostle named James-cousin of Jesus.) With their father, James and John were fishermen in Galilee. Soon after Jesus called Peter and Andrew (themselves fishermen and brothers) as His followers, He saw James and John mending their fishing nets: when He summoned them, they left their father Zebedee behind and became His disciples. Though James and John deserve credit for their decisiveness in following Christ, this characteristic sometimes manifested itself as impetuosity and as a sudden temper. At first, James struggled a lot with forgiveness and was slow to forgive since he would remember how people had injured him. The dwelling on that injury fueled a fire for vengeance. For example, when a Samaritan town refused to receive Jesus, the two brothers wanted Christ to punish it by calling down fire from Heaven (Luke 9:51-56). It was perhaps for reasons such as this that Jesus gave them the title "sons of thunder."

Eventually, James allowed God to teach him how to surrender all the wrongs that were done to him to God. This kept a fire for vengeance from growing and instead allowed James to become very forgiving of those who wronged him. After Christ's Resurrection, James was a leader to the early Christian community in Jerusalem. He was the first of the apostles to be martyred. In 44 AD, King Herod Agrippa had James killed by the sword to appease the Jewish opponents of Christianity (Acts 12:1-2). The apostle who had been so unforgiving became the first apostle to forgive those who wronged him.

The deadly sin of wrath can express itself in unforgiveness where we refuse to let go of the wrongs done to us. The Evil One wants us to dwell on the ways people have hurt us so that it continues to fuel our unforgiveness. As long as we hold onto the hurt then the wrath of vengeance has something to hold onto. We are not called to forget how we were hurt. However, we are called to release our hurts to God so they can be healed and we can forgive. Who have you refused to forgive because of how you would not let go of the hurt done to you?

For your prayer

St. James would have heard John 13:21-33, 36-38. Use your imagination as you slowly read John 13:21-33, 36-38. Please reflect on how Jesus always forgave those who hurt him by never holding onto the hurt. Reflect on what hurts have been done to you in your life that God wishes to take from you so that you can forgive those who have offended you in your life.