Wednesday of 5th Week of Lent

EASY

“You will never enjoy the sweetness of a quiet prayer unless you shut your mind to all worldly desires and temporal affairs.” - St. Norbert

ST NORBERT

The early part of St. Norbert’s life was devoted to the world and its pleasures. He entered upon the ecclesiastical state in a worldly spirit always choosing the easy way. He led a carefree life as a cleric and court official under Emperor Henry V. Then one day a thunderstorm boiled up suddenly as Norbert was out riding. Norbert, who had always chosen the easy way, would never have deliberately gone on a journey that promised danger, risk, or discomfort. He had moved easily from the comforts of the noble family he was born into the pleasure-loving German court. He had no hesitations about joining in any opportunity to enjoy himself, no matter what the source of that pleasure. To ensure his success at court, he also had no qualms about accepting holy orders as a canon and whatever financial benefices that came with that position.

But then a sudden flash of lightning split the dark and his horse bucked, throwing Norbert to the ground. For almost an hour, the still form of the courtier lay unmoving. When he awoke his first words were, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" -- the same words Saul spoke on the road to Damascus. In response Norbert heard in his heart, "Turn from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it." He now embraced the instruction for the priesthood he had avoided and was ordained in 1115. His complete conversion and new ways caused some to denounce the former courtier as a hypocrite. Norbert's response was to give everything he owned to the poor and to go to the pope for permission to preach. In an extreme response to his old ways, he now chose the most difficult ways to travel -- walking barefoot in the middle of winter through snow and ice. Some thought that St. Norbert had become too strict and his way too difficult. A far cry from his old, easy lifestyle.

The deadly sin of sloth involves us trying to do things the easy way and avoiding the more difficult way. We can avoid spiritual growth by always doing what comes easy to us and never really learning how to pray. While prayer and holiness is a blessing and joy, it is not easy to learn. It involves a commitment to work and stretching ourselves in new and uncomfortable way. We might first struggle but with time and diligence we will start to experience the sweetness of prayer. How in your life have you gone the easy route and avoided the more challenging way that God was leading you to travel?

For your prayer

St. Norbert would have prayed with John 8:31-42. Use your imagination as you slowly read John 8:31-42. Please reflect on how those who commit sins are slaves to sin by choosing the easy path rather than the more challenging path. Reflect on how you have fallen into sin by going the easy way rather than the more challenging path.