

Congregation of the Sacred Hearts
of Jesus and Mary



November 2009

Com-Union

20



***Father Damien`s
Canonization***

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Introduction

November 2009

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

“Holiness belongs to your house, LORD...” Psalm 93: 5

This edition of Com-Union records our heart-felt memories of our celebration of the recognition of the holiness of our brother Damien in communion with the universal Church.

When we hear the words of the Psalmist “holiness belongs to your house,” we think of Saint Damien. In his life God’s love was always present shared in his gestures, words and daily life. God shone in Saint Damien, he made God close to his brothers and sisters, who suffered abandonment, isolation and the denial of their dignity. He was close to them and he served them with tenderness and compassion. With his words and his acts of love, he spoke to them of God who loved them and cared for them without distinction of race, sex or religion. His presence among them was the response of God to their cries.

“Man is holy to the extent that he lets God happen in him. How? Doing good through love and also through love avoiding evil. Love, goodness and holiness are the same thing. God happening in man. In that sense a “saint” is one who lives with God returning love for love.”
(Hernando Uribe)

When that happens, we find ourselves face to face with people who write a timeless message with their very lives.

May the sanctity of Damien awaken also in us the holiness to which God is calling us so that like Damien we might be men and women who proclaim and live hope in the love of God that is always faithful and that makes possible the impossible, for his love is without end.

Affectionately in the Sacred Hearts

Rosa Mª Ferreiro ss.cc.
Superior General



Javier Álvarez-Ossorio ss.cc.
Superior General



Welcome – Vigil

(Sta. Maria sopra Minerva, 10.10.09)

Rosa María Ferreiro ss.cc.



Dear brothers and sisters, friends and all present:

You are welcome to this vigil of prayer to prepare ourselves for the canonization of Fr Damien to take place tomorrow at St. Peter's Square.

We come this afternoon to this basilica of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, to pay tribute to Father Damien, Apostle of the leprosy patients, to whose care he devoted his life during 16 years on the island of Molokai, until he died as one of them.

We are here, from many countries, some from very far away, united by a common desire to express our thanksgiving to God for the gift that Fr Damien was in his time for those marginalized and condemned to isolation, and for the light that he still is, for all of us today, we who dream and work for a new world, a family of the children of God, where there are no victims or excluded.

On behalf of the Congregation, that is experiencing the joy of seeing for the first time, one of her sons being proclaimed a Saint by the Church, thank you for your presence.

Cardinal Carlos Amigo, Archbishop of Seville, is with us today. Your Eminence, thank you for joining us in this important moment for the Sacred Hearts family.

Meditation before the Eucharist - Vigil

(Sta. Maria sopra Minerva, 10.10.09)

Javier Álvarez-Ossorio ss.cc.



Lord, during this evening of vigil and prayer, contemplating the sacrament of your merciful and sacrificial love, we give you thanks.

We thank you, crucified Jesus, because you have borne our suffering and our pain. Because your wounds have healed us. Because you carry us and justify all, the great multitude, all of humanity.

We give you thanks for Damien. In him you created a masterpiece of the Spirit. Damien, who exposed his own life to death, who chose his friends from among the most abandoned and who was able to love to the very end. And all of that, for you, for your Gospel of mad unbounded love.

Thank you, risen Christ, conqueror of death, reward of all who hope in you. Thank you because Damien is not just a “famous dead man,” or a hero to be admired from the past. No, Damien is alive with your life, and now more than ever he is part of the prayer of the Church, that hopeful and pleading prayer that ceaselessly asks for the coming among us of your Reign, Reign of peace and justice, Reign of life and truth.

Thank you, Jesus, for the strange happiness that inundated Damien’s heart. The happiness of a free man who claimed nothing for himself. The happiness that no pain, no sickness, no disdain, no poverty, not even death could take away. The happiness of the sinner that knows he is loved and forgiven. The happiness of one who loves with profound tenderness those who can give nothing in return. The happiness of the missionary who speaks of you, who awakens in others thirst for your love, who consoles them with the balm of your grace. The happiness of one whose faults and failings are consumed in the burning fire of love and service. Thank you, Christ, merciful friend, for you did not leave Damien alone but led him by the hand right to the very end. Only from you, Lord, comes true joy and plenteous redemption.

Lord, look upon us gathered before you to adore you. Look at our littleness and our slowness and give us your joy. We are many and tomorrow we will be more. We are from different places, of different races and cultures. We are a small sample of beautiful suffering humanity, brothers and sisters but still divided, united but also with conflicts. What a joy it is to call one another brothers and sisters! But how we also make one another suffer with our pride, our indifference, our dark side, our hatred! How much sorrow and misery there is in this world! How terrible is the anguished cry of innumerable little ones of the world, the despised, massacred, outcast, their basic human dignity trampled on...! Teach us how to love as Damien loved. To look at one another with goodness of heart. To overcome barriers as Damien did, barriers of distance, race, religion, language, repulsion, fear, resentment...To freely commit ourselves, without always thinking of our security. Help us to love as you loved.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for your wounded, loving redeeming heart. Thank you for the heart of Mary, obedient, disciple, mother. Thank you for these Sacred Hearts that made Damien a

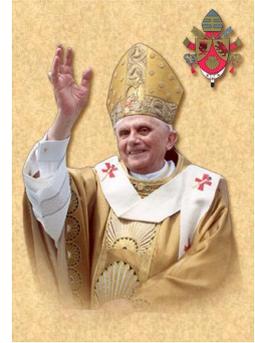
universal brother, model of humanity, apostle of those afflicted with leprosy, hero of charity, inspiration for every human being called to serve the outcast and forgotten, glory of the whole Church, reflection of the loving holiness of God among us.

You, who passed through the world doing good, make fruitful our joy so that it might bear the fruit of goodness, justice and compassion to the glory of God the Father.

Homily of his holiness Benedict XVI

(Extract)

Vatican Basilica Sunday, 11 October 2009



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

"What must I do to inherit eternal life?". The brief conversation we heard in the Gospel passage, between a man identified elsewhere as the rich young man and Jesus, begins with this question (cf. Mk 10: 17-30). We do not have many details about this anonymous figure; yet from a few characteristics we succeed in perceiving his sincere desire to attain eternal life by leading an honest and virtuous earthly existence. In fact he knows the commandments and has observed them faithfully from his youth. Yet, all this which is of course important is not enough. Jesus says he lacks one thing, but it is something essential. Then, seeing him well disposed, the divine Teacher looks at him lovingly and suggests to him a leap in quality; he calls the young man to heroism in holiness, he asks him to abandon everything to follow him: "go, sell what you have, and give to the poor... and come, follow me" (v. 21).

"Come, follow me". This is the Christian vocation which is born from the Lord's proposal of love and can only be fulfilled in our loving response. Jesus invites his disciples to give their lives completely, without calculation or personal interest, with unreserved trust in God. Saints accept this demanding invitation and set out with humble docility in the following of the Crucified and Risen Christ. Their perfection, in the logic of faith sometimes humanly incomprehensible consists in no longer putting themselves at the centre but in choosing to go against the tide, living in line with the Gospel. This is what the five Saints did who are held up today with great joy for the veneration of the universal Church: Zygmunt Szczęsny Feliński, Francisco Coll y Guitart, Jozef Damien de Veuster, Rafael Arnáiz Barón and Mary of the Cross (Jeanne Jugan). In them we contemplate the Apostle Peter's words fulfilled: "Lo, we have left everything and followed you" (v. 28), and Jesus' comforting reassurance: "there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the Gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time... with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life" (vv. 29-30).

Zygmunt Szczęsny Feliński,

Aware of this, St Francisco Coll

Jozef De Veuster received the name of Damien in the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. When he was 23 years old, in 1863, he left Flanders, the land of his birth, to proclaim the Gospel on the other side of the world in the Hawaiian Islands. His missionary activity, which gave him such joy, reached its peak in charity. Not without fear and repugnance, he chose to go to the Island of Molokai to serve the lepers who lived there, abandoned by all. Thus he was exposed to the disease from which they suffered. He felt at home with them. The servant of the Word consequently became a suffering servant, a leper with the lepers, for the

last four years of his life. In order to follow Christ, Fr Damien not only left his homeland but also risked his health: therefore as the word of Jesus proclaimed to us in today's Gospel says he received eternal life (cf. Mk 10: 30). On this 20th anniversary of the Canonization of another Belgian Saint, Bro. Mutien-Marie, the Church in Belgium has once again come together to give thanks to God for the recognition of one of its sons as an authentic servant of God. Let us remember before this noble figure that it is charity which makes unity, brings it forth and makes it desirable. Following in St Paul's footsteps, St Damien prompts us to choose the good warfare (cf. 1 Tim 1: 18), not the kind that brings division but the kind that gathers people together. He invites us to open our eyes to the forms of leprosy that disfigure the humanity of our brethren and still today call for the charity of our presence as servants, beyond that of our generosity.

...

Dear brothers and sisters, let us thank the Lord for the gift of holiness which shines out in the Church today with unique beauty. While I greet with affection each one of you Cardinals, Bishops, civil and military authorities, priests, men and women religious and members of the lay faithful of various nationalities who are taking part in this solemn Eucharistic celebration I would like to address to all the invitation to let yourselves be attracted by the luminous examples of these Saints, to let yourselves be guided by their teaching so that our entire life may become a song of praise to God's love. May their heavenly intercession obtain for us this grace and, especially, the motherly protection of Mary, Queen and Mother of humanity. Amen.

A Message from the President of the USA



In a press release, President Barack Obama, who was raised in Hawaii, noted on the day of the canonization of Damien:

“Saint Damien has earned a special place in the hearts of Hawaiians. I recall many stories from my youth about his tireless work with the leprosy patients...he was renowned for treating them with love and compassion. He ultimately contracted Hansen’s Disease and died in 1889. ...Following in the steps of Jesus’ ministry to help the leprosy patients, Fr. Damien challenged the stigmatizing effects of the disease giving voice to the voiceless and ultimately sacrificing his own life to bring dignity to so many. ...We should draw an example of Fr. Damien’s resolve in answering the urgent call to heal and care for the sick.”

President Obama sent a delegation representing the United States that included Bishop Larry Silva of the Diocese of Honolulu, Sister Carol Ann Keehan, a Daughter of Charity who is President of the Catholic Health Association, US Senator Daniel Akaka of Hawaii, US Representative Donald M. Payne of NJ, and Steven Prokop, Superintendent of the Kalaupapa National Historic Park. Leading the delegation was the new US Ambassador to the Vatican, Miguel Diaz.

A Personal Audience



Audrey Toguchi and her husband **Yukio** met **Pope Benedict XVI** at the general audience in St. Peter's Square the Wednesday before the canonization. Audrey was miraculously cured of cancer through the intercession of Fr. Damien. Also present was **Dr. Chang**, a Buddhist, who was instrumental in proclaiming that the cure of cancer was unexplainable in the case of Audrey Toguchi.



Eleven of the nineteen leprosy patients still in Kalaupapa attended the canonization ceremony and were VIP guests.

The Canonization of Damien from the Perspective of the Generalate

Juan Luis Schuster ss.cc.



For the last couple of months since October 11 was confirmed as the date of Damien's canonization we have all been preparing, especially Alfred as postulator.

Already on October 6, trips to the Rome airports had begun. A few arrived at the wrong time and so some of us spent a good amount of time at the airport. Staying with us at our house were the guests of the General Council: Patrick Bradley and Enrique Losada, former Superiors General, Ángel Lucas and Emilio Vega, former Postulators and bishops of the Congregation: Luiz Mancilha from Brazil and Manuel Donoso and Gonzalo Duarte of Chile. There were also brothers who had not come to Rome with a group. There were several provincials: Carlos Mendoza from México, Antun Wardoyo from Indonesia, Camille Sapu from África and other brothers from Asia, Latin America and Europe. We were 40. Our newly remodeled house was full for the first time since the work we had done last year. And as all did not fit 14 spent the night with our neighbors the Brothers of Ploermel. Also in the days around the canonization other brothers, sisters and laity visited to see the new house and some to share a meal. They were days of much movement and a true experience of internationality in our community.

Besides the three official celebrations planned by the team led by Felipe, there were other activities in the embassies, other Masses, for example one for the Hawaiian group on Monday evening, led by their bishop, Larry Silva.

We traveled from via Rivarone to the three celebrations by bus. There was enough time before and after the celebrations to meet up with the pilgrims who came from different countries and continents. It was a time of much joy.

On Saturday October 10 we had an evening celebration in the church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva. To set the tone, there were signs and posters about Damien around the church. It was the first gathering of the ss.cc pilgrims and it prepared us for the canonization. It began with words of welcome from Javier and Rosa, the Superiors General, and a song in Hawaiian, which right from the very beginning told us that this was a celebration of our international community. There were two parts to the vigil: the first was a time of meditation composed of excerpts from Damien's letters with "Oser la vie" sung between each reading. The second part was a time of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament with a text from Isaiah (53:1-12) and other texts from the Constitutions. We finished with benediction and the Salve Regina. There were at least 3,000 present. All the booklets in the various languages were gone.

Sunday October 11 Damien was canonized with 4 other blessed, two Spanish, a Pole and a French woman. It was a celebration of the universal Church with Pope Benedict XVI presiding. It was prepared and organized by the various congregations of the Roman curia.

With the change of place, decided it seems at 5:00 AM, getting into the square or the Basilica took more than an hour and was pretty chaotic. The public was not told of the change of location. We found out indirectly by an announcement made just before the 5 blessed were presented. As we were not able to be in the right place, we had to watch the celebration on large screens and were unable to really participate in the Eucharist. There was also a good bit of Latin, more than necessary. At the end the Pope came out to the Square to give a brief message and his blessing.

After the canonization we got on the buses that were waiting to go to the Hotel Ergife for a family meal, all of us at tables of 8. We were some 750 brothers, sisters, laity and invited guests. It was a great experience of being together as a world-wide ss.cc. family. After dinner some came over to the house to visit. That evening we had a supper of pizza at home with those who had not gone out with one of the pilgrimage groups.

Monday October 12 we left early by bus for the Mass of Thanksgiving at Saint John Lateran, arriving early to prepare things and welcome the different groups. The Mass began at 10:00 and was celebrated by all the priests and bishops present. Music was led by a choir from Hawaii. At the offertory the five continents where the Congregation is in mission offered gifts. Cardinal Daneels of Brussels presided. It was too bad that the celebration did not finish as planned with Javier giving of the relic of Damien to Bishop Larry Silva of Honolulu and words of thanks by Javier. After the Mass some groups had to get to the airport to go home. Others took advantage of the occasion to visit Italy or Belgium.

When we got home about 1:00 we had an aperitif and a festive meal with those staying with us. We were some 40. That day there were also other celebrations such as the Hawaiian Mass which from all reports was very moving and joyful.

On Tuesday and for the rest of the week our guests started leaving little by little and there were again many trips to the airports. The community's usual rhythm resumed but there remains with us the happy memory of this international gathering of the ss.cc. family to celebrate Damien here in Rome.

More than three days in Rome, with Damien

Mónica Jiménez ss.cc.



To live in Rome during this time in which the Church gives thanks to God for our brother Damien and inscribes him in the Book of Saints, has been an experience of joy increasing each day since the day that the miracle was approved, followed by the signing by the Holy Father, then the announcement of the date in the Vatican, then the beginning of the preparations, the communications to the whole congregation, to know the impact that it was having in each place where there are sisters, brothers and lay ss.cc., questions, requests, feeling the desire of all to be here and wanting to be united in various ways with what will be lived in Rome. And we, doing our best to make it, a universal fraternity, an immense joy. It is our brother Damien, the brother of all, who is at the center of all this movement.

October arrived, the big day approaches, our life in Rome is busy with preparations. Our houses are home to many. Pilgrims begin to arrive from all over the world.

Many media outlets want to know and announce the great news, especially knowing the strength of this great witness of the congregation; to know what we do today, what Damien tells us today, what challenges his example gives to us, in our mission in today's society.

The program we have is intense, many activities prior to October 11, during and after this great day.

On Tuesday 6 our sisters from Hawaii arrive to Rome, they had gone previously on pilgrimage to Belgium. They participate in the Papal audience on Wednesday and after share our lunch with us in the Generalate, time to listen to each one of them, to know about their life in the USA Pacific communities. They tell us that a very large group of lay people is coming to participate in the feast of Damien's canonization.

On Friday 9 more than a thousand young students from our schools in Spain (Sisters' and Brothers') performed a show in the Brazilian College, it was an enthusiastic crowd because of their youth, joy, and commitment to the person of Damien.

Saturday 10, was the Vigil: at 17:30 the students from our ss.cc. schools from Spain, met at the in the Basilica of San Andrea della Valle, the Church was completely filled by young boys and girls. The atmosphere of prayer that they achieved was amazing!

The congregation invited pilgrims to a vigil prepared by sisters and brothers of the General Government, to be held at 19.00. Pilgrims from all over the world began to arrive an hour earlier to the Basilica Santa Maria Sopra Minerva, a festive gathering in the square and inside the basilica, it was a display of ss.cc. banners, paintings, posters, hats, scarves, and a multitude of logos. Very colorful crowds because many pilgrims were wearing their native costumes from Africa, Asia, Hawaii, Polynesia; and surely, the habits of sisters and brothers. We felt the family spirit, the spirit of a large family.

We lived the vigil in an ambiance of prayer, motivated by the congregation with many signs: the picture of the SS.CC., the red cloak for adoration, a missal, the hat and tools of Damian, and the pall, which helped us to recognize once more Damian's surrender, his love for the Eucharist, his being a true son of the Sacred Hearts ... We lived a time of adoration with the Blessed Sacrament Exposed and a final Blessing, which left us very well motivated for the next day.

That same day, sisters and brothers from France who with 54 young people, had lived two days of pilgrimage in Rome, held a vigil at 20:00 in the church of St. Louis de France, that was open to all who wished to participate in it. It was a concert that helped them to live a deep time of prayer.

Sunday 11, began at an early hour for many pilgrims, before 06:00 AM many were already lining up to enter Saint Peter's Square, motivated by the desire to better participate in this celebration. The security machines, opened just after 08:30 am and it was at that point that we learned that the ceremony would be inside the Basilica, which meant a lot of running to gain entry and have a place inside. Unfortunately, for most of us it was useless, therefore we had to follow the ceremony from the screens in St Peter's Square and of course all were not happy with this experience.

We participated in the solemn Eucharist presided over by the Holy Father, where our brother Damian was canonized along with four other saints. The Superior General and two former Superior Generals, concelebrated with the Holy Father, and also the two brother ex-postulators and our ss.cc. Bishops. Of course there were also many other Cardinals, Bishops and such. Alfred Bell, our current Postulator had an important role in the celebration. Our Sisters from the General Government participated in the Offertory, the offering of the relic and in receiving Holy Communion from the Pope's hands.

With joy in our hearts for everything lived, about 750 of us participants of this event, shared a festive meal, at the invitation of the Congregation at the Hotel Ergife: we were sisters, brothers, lay people and guests closely related with Damien and the Congregation. It was a moment of a warm meeting for many, and with many.

How not to meet again to praise and bless the Lord for this canonization! So we met again on Monday 12 for a Thanksgiving Mass at 10:00 am in St. John Lateran Basilica, also very well prepared by sisters and brothers of the General Governments. It was presided over by Cardinal Danneels of Mechelen-Brussels (Belgium). This time we had meaningful offerings, which were presented by brothers and sisters representing each continent. The songs were accompanied by the choir from Honolulu - Hawaii and the choir of the students of the SS.CC. Father Damien School, in Barcelona. (Spain).

At the end of the Eucharist, the Provincial Superior of Flanders, Frans Gorissen, presented a relic of Saint Damien to Mgr. Larry Silva, Bishop of Honolulu (Hawaii), which will be placed in the Cathedral dedicated to Our Lady of Peace in Honolulu.

Leaving the Basilica, the farewells began; already many groups were leaving immediately, for sure bringing with them the joy of the lived experience, eager to share it with those who are waiting for them in their communities. An abundant rain sealed these farewells, as a shower of graces and blessings.

My personal memories of Damien's canonization

Chris Keahi ss.cc.



Unfortunately, despite the tremendous excitement leading to the canonization of Saint Damien, there were bitter sweet moments that will live forever in the minds and hearts of so many pilgrims that had come from afar to attend the ceremonies that should have been the highlight of their Catholic faith and devotion to the saintly priest of Molokai.

The evening before at the Basilica of Santa Maria sopra Minerva (near the Pantheon) crowds waited as the Eucharist was being celebrated within. The basilica doors were closed to maintain the quietude and sanctity of the Mass that was being celebrated by a number of priests and a nave filled with Saturday evening worshippers. Even though there was a wait, we were in the square greeting fellow members of the Congregation from all over the world: Japan, India, Ecuador, Mexico, Philippines, Norway, Poland, Spain, France, England, United States and Chile, just to name a few countries where the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary minister within.

Finally the doors were opened and throngs rushed in much to the consternation of those who just about to complete the celebration of Mass. Unfortunately, instead of waiting till all of the worshippers were out of the Basilica, the throngs, hoping to get good seats, surged through two front entrances with such force, no one was able to leave the church. Many worshippers then decided to stay for the Vigil. This prevented a huge number wishing to participate in the prayer vigil of thanksgiving from doing so leaving them outside for there was no room in the Basilica. Crowds surged even into the sanctuary sitting on the steps and floor for lack of pews and chairs.

The vigil began with the two Superior Generals, Very Reverend Javier Alvarez Ossorio and Sister Rosa Maria Ferrero, welcoming one and all with joy and thanksgiving. Various former Superior Generals as well as Provincials of different provinces took part in the prayer vigil including our own, Christopher Keahi, from Hawaii. His voice, strong and clear, boomed throughout the Basilica with clarity and distinction as he read from the book of Isaiah the prophet.

Those outside could not hear what was going on inside the Basilica but heard the sound of thunder becoming louder and louder and the visible sign of lightening brightened the darkness of the sky. Throughout the night and early morning rain fell on the eternal city of Rome. It dissipated when the pilgrims made their way to Saint Peter's Square early Sunday morning. The Hawaii contingent arrived at approximately 7:30 AM and waited patiently for the security gates to open. In the meantime hundreds of other pilgrims soon joined them as at the gate. Many flags, scarves and shirts were seen and songs of joy pierced the air as everyone patiently endured the wait for the gates to open.

We were not told that the canonization ceremony had been moved into the Basilica of St. Peter. That was the beginning of what would become the worst moment of what should have

been the highlight of their trip to Rome and the canonization of Saint Damien. When the gates were finally opened the throngs became unruly, pushing and shoving so that they would get into the square. We could see people running toward the Basilica.

It was nearly ten minutes after 9 AM when I was able to enter into the square trying to make my way past security guards so that I could find the site where we the concelebrants for the canonization Mass were to gather. Finally, I made it and was greeted by other members of our Congregation. As we prepared ourselves for the solemn entrance did I realize the ceremony had been moved indoors for fear of rain. Such trepidations were unfounded as the morning turned into day without a drop of rain. Yet faces were watered by tears of frustration. They came with special tickets to be close to the ceremonies and were turned away because the Basilica was full.

Anger soon overtook the excitement and joyful emotions as disappointed people sat or stood in the square having to see the entire event on four large television screens. Four members with special blue tickets, members of our General Government were among those agitated by the turn of events. A grandmother who had travelled from Hawaii with her granddaughter as well as others who had come specifically for this moment wept openly in sadness. Another stated that she did not come to Rome to watch the canonization on a television screen for she could have done that in Hawaii without the need to have spent nearly five thousand dollars to do so.

It was Sunday and tens of thousands were equally frustrated that they were not able to receive Our Lord in Holy Communion even though there were over a hundred priests and deacons distributing the Lord when there should have been a thousand priests and deacons doing so. Truly it was a bitter moment for those who were denied the Lord on this special holy day.

Pope Benedict XVI, thoughtful enough, made his way after the canonization ceremonies, to the outside canopy to greet the immense crowds that had filled the square to its edges. He spoke apologizing to them and then glancing through a list of countries that the pilgrims had come mentioned them verbally by name. It was an appeasement but only a band aid treatment that covered the hurts, anger and frustrations that remain open wounds that will heal with time.

Bishop Larry Silva himself was disappointed when he was not given the relic of Saint Damien at the canonization ceremonies. He wanted to bring the relic to the North American College chapel where he was to celebrate Mass at 6:30 AM on Monday, the following day. A number of telephone calls were made to locate the relic but to no avail. It was mentioned that the relic would be given to him by the Provincial of the Flemish Province after the Monday morning 10:00 AM Mass of Thanksgiving celebrated at the Basilica of Saint John Lateran by Cardinal Godfried Danneels of Belgium.

Present at the Thanksgiving Mass of the Congregation was a woman filled with anxiety as she sat near the Damien Diocesan Choir of Honolulu. Her name is Cynthia Chun Kim and she composed "The Mass of Faithful Love in Honor of Holy Father Damien of Molokai". She sat reading and reading in the various languages that her composition would be sung at this Mass. The liturgy begins and the choir's combined voices sing forth the Kyrie Eleison but she is totally shocked for it was not the score she had composed for the occasion. It was a score from another source.

The Congregation wanted to make a formal presentation to Bishop Silva before the end of the Thanksgiving Mass but Cardinal Danneels, perhaps unaware of what was planned, ended the services without a word of appreciation by the Sacred Hearts Superior General nor for the fanfare of handing the relic over to the Bishop of Honolulu. While the Cardinal, Episcopal concelebrants and hundreds of priests began dispersing, the transfer was announced and the relic is now in the hands of Bishop Silva.

Yes, Damien has been elevated to sainthood but celebrated with only bitter sweet emotions.

Damien is a Saint. Fueled by his enthusiasm for charity.



*Sr. José Vivys, ss.cc.
Coordinator of the Sisters of SS CC Belgium*

The day of Damien's canonization in Rome on the 11th October 2009, was preceded by several meetings and countless activities in Belgium. Inhabitants of Tremelo, Antwerp's youth, all the city of Leuven, our Charleroi parish, they all commemorated this event.

The national celebration in Koekelberg, Brussels, on Sunday the 18th of October and the "Damian" day with the religious of Flanders on the 27th of October, concluded the series of feasts around our new saint.

Damien's canonization was a day of grace in the history of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts, in the history of the universal Church, and particularly in Flanders.

For me too, Damien's canonization has marked my personal life. Songs, meditations, books, celebrations, and monologues in the theater, exhibitions and entertainment in schools, everything around Damian has moved and changed my life deeply.

Words such as:

"Do not be afraid to take risks; do not be afraid to accept the field of work where God has placed you. We can not choose our Molokai."

"Do not be afraid to work for lost causes. Do not be afraid of your faults and poverty saying 'I'll never arrive'. And above all, do not be afraid to present the source from which flow our strength,, that is, God and his Gospel".

"Faith casts out fear of the unknown."

All these words spoken by Cardinal Danneels in Rome or elsewhere, have touched me in the depths of my being. Sometimes I ask myself these questions:

What am I doing now? What fruits do I give? How is the spirituality of our Congregation alive in the Church and in the world today? What can still be done in an aged Province or Sector?

It is for these reasons that the festivities at this particular time in history have been so important for Belgium for the Church and for us. All the initiatives around Damian undertaken by believers and nonbelievers alike, young and older people have been for me a delightful experience that has lifted our spirits. Situations without answers, extreme individualism and indifference with regard to faith, have moved and been replaced by admiration, joy, solidarity and gratitude.

Since 1936, Belgium has never seen as much enthusiasm for Damien as today...

Moreover, Damian was not afraid to pronounce the name of God; he was not ashamed to say from what source he derived his strength. He teaches me, and I think he teaches us all to say

"yes" to questions we did not expect. Neither could he foresee everything, he could not program everything, but he responded to the circumstances. This attitude is very important to me in front of the task given to me. And is it not so today, for the entire Congregation? I give thanks to God for our Saint, a brother in the Congregation.

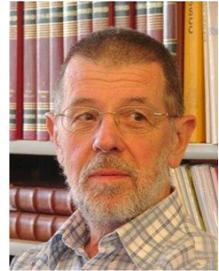
He is a teacher who inspires us in following Jesus.

He tells us each one of us: "Do not run away, even if the moments are difficult. Stay with your brothers and sisters, stay with the people who need you, especially with those that are most weak!

Saint Damian, pray for us all.

Damien, the palm tree

Jan Wouters ss.cc.



Of all the festive celebrations around Damian's canonisation for me the thanksgiving service on Monday-morning in the St. John of Lateran was the most inspiring. About the celebration of the canonization itself I do not know anything because during that celebration I was the main celebrant in the Church of the Friesians, the Dutch church that from all churches in Rome lies closest to the Saint Peter! I heard some fellow-brothers and –sisters, who had attended the celebration of the canonization from the Saint Peters' square, afterwards say they might just as well have stayed at home: they could likely have followed everything better. I myself had fortunately a very good celebration in that hour, during which I could tell the people present a lot about Damian (very many Dutchmen do not know Damian).

As the Dutch and Flemish ssc group were already present well before the celebration in the Saint John of Lateran, I had the opportunity to walk around a bit and meet here and there brothers and sisters. Of course we had had ample opportunity to do this at other celebrations and during the diner on Sunday, but this time everyone was so grateful because of Damian's canonization that you could tell the joy from everyone's face.

I thought the offering the most beautiful moment of the celebration. Brothers and sisters from the various continents brought up those five splendid symbols: from Africa the carved out palm tree, from Europe that unsightly trumpet, from Asia that beautiful batik cloth, from South America that dish abundantly loaded with fruits and flowers and finally from North America that splendid banner with the representation of Damian. The sanctuary was for just a moment not dominated by the many bishops and priests (whether or not ss.cc) in their official robes, but by brothers and sisters of our worldwide congregation, all of them in their local festive attire. Damian, our new saint, came very concretely before us through the symbolic of these everyday objects. Especially the symbolic of the palm tree appealed very much to me. The palm tree, the tree that puts itself completely in people's service. There is nothing of the palm tree that cannot be used: the trunk, the leaves, the marrow, the nuts....nothing of it remains. And when it does not give actively, it gives by 'being present': it gives support, hold and shadow. Total availability.

Of course the other gifts were very valuable in their symbolic, but the palm tree appealed to me most. In it I saw Damian back in all the stages of his life, completely giving himself, until death.

Much to my regret was, that those splendid symbols were immediately taken away from the sanctuary and that the brothers and sisters who had brought them up had to return to their seats in the church. The sanctuary was again for the lords with their miters and official robes. The offering suddenly seemed to be just an intermezzo. A pity.

The second high point of everything we experienced together was for me the festive dinner after the canonization. This was for me like a eucharistic celebration, a dinner of thanksgiving in which we all together formed one big community of brothers and sisters. There was plenty of opportunities to exchange greetings and get more acquainted. There was much talking and

singing and many hundreds of pictures were taken. It was a feast you seldom experience, maybe never... How happy we were, how much attention we had for each other! Nobody missed something. And all this in honor of Damian, in gratitude for his holy life and his salutary work.

I take this opportunity to congratulate all my ssc-brothers and –sisters with our saint Damian and to thank warm-heartedly everyone who has participated in the success of these three feasts.

May Damian continue inspiring us to contemplate, live and spread God's love for all people.

Canonization: Life time event



Ajith Kumar, ss.cc.

The long awaited celebration finally came to its fulfillment. After long years of earnest waiting Fr. Damien is proclaimed a saint: the first saint of our congregation. Blessed am I to be part of this lifetime event. It was really in God's providence that I was present for the canonization. From India we were three ss.cc. brothers along with my mother present for the celebration but actually there was a group of people who wanted to attend the celebration but due to difficulties in obtaining visas were not able to come. The celebration was not just a celebration, rather a meaningful event, which will remain with me till my death. Vespers on the previous evening was a good preparation for the canonization the following day. Adoration, symbolic presentation and the reflections of the superior general were the important components of the vespers.

The church was crowded with people, not only ss.cc, members, but fans of Fr. Damien: the Hero of Molokai. Today he is not only the Hero of Molokai, but also a hero for all those who work for human dignity and development. For me it was so moving because at this wonderful time I am assigned as the director of the Damien Social Development Institute, which is the only institute of the congregation world wide, which works directly with Hansen Diseases patients on a day to day basis. Damien Social Development Institute of the congregation in India takes care of four leprosy colonies and provides medical, educational and food nutrition programmes for the sick in these colonies.

This canonization celebration is a recognition of all those who work with Hansen's disease patients. As a preparation for the canonization here in Cuttack- Bhubaneswar Archdiocese, Orissa, India, we went to different parishes of the archdiocese to talk about Fr. Damien and had simple celebrations. The Celebration in Rome was very touching for me; I was able to be inside the Basilica with others to partake in the celebration and witness people from different countries reverencing Fr. Damien (there were also people present to reverence the other saints who were canonized but a good number of people were there for Fr. Damien).

The next day a thanksgiving mass with 14 bishops and a cardinal was another awesome experience. After the mass the archbishop of Honolulu held the relic of Fr. Damien and I had a chance to touch and kiss it. Along with all these experience I was able to feel at home at our generalate; the experience of the internationality of our congregation was the zenith of all experiences. A family of members from different countries, of different languages, with different cultures but with one mission to follow Christ. How wonderful it is to be son of the Sacred Hearts!

“Accepting a salary for my work and being the youngest...

Manfred Kollig SS.CC.



my mother would no longer recognize me as her son.” Leah Bracht, a student of St Christophorus school in Werne, Germany, placed that quote from our canonized brother, Damien, in the center of a collage that she made. This young woman was fascinated by the natural way in which Damien cared for people so clearly rejected by their families and society. It was in that way, “naturally and simply,” that I experienced the canonization of our brother.

Natural and so clear was the family spirit of brothers and sisters from all over the world, come together in Rome with so many laity to pray, share and celebrate. A big international family, remembering the spirit and example of Father Damien, adored Jesus Christ. There were people from all over the world, invited by Damien, united around Jesus at the center. Everyone sang “Oser la Vie” – “Dare to live.” Each and everyone declared that they were ready to accept that risk within their own possibilities today in some specific place.

I also experienced the canonization of Damien and four others on October 11 in Saint Peter’s Square as something natural and clear, without elaborate staging. There I was standing under the sun, near the Obelisk, surrounded by students from our schools in Spain, watching the large screens transmitting images of Pope Benedict with important people of the Church and politics. More and more not only the young but also the thousands of others on the square felt out of touch with the celebration taking place within the Basilica. When communion was distributed only to those in the front part of the square and more than 90% of those present were unable to receive the Eucharist, I felt something of our brother Damien: a yearning for Christ, aloneness and disappointment. It would seem that the celebration of Damien’s canonization should have taken place in a more natural and simpler atmosphere. After all this is Damien, who during his life took the decoration that he received from Princess Liliuokalani with a grain of salt and good humor.

On Monday, the Basilica of Saint John Lateran full of people was not the only impressive thing. In the Mass of Thanksgiving Cardinal Daneels recalled the words that our brother Damien never uttered. And so Damien never said “no more.” The Cardinal’s homily invited me to contemplate not only things the saints said but the things they left unsaid. At the offertory Damien’s trumpet, the tools and the gauze bandages reminded me that Damien cared for the whole person and was attentive to both their physical and spiritual wellbeing.

With all of that, I found myself really at home among the great family of the Sacred Hearts, whether we were celebrating and praying in different Basilicas, gathering on the squares or in the great “pranzo” on Sunday or just living together in the Generalate. At each and every moment I felt the great joy that one of our own had been recognized publically as a saint. And someone who was so normal and energetic, in whom nature and grace came together in such a marvelous way. Much thanks to our brothers and sisters in Rome who by all their preparation and their generous hospitality let us experience that we are one big family and that Damien is one of us.

A Personal Account



Percival Cowley V. ss.cc.

What I would say about the three days in Rome celebrating Father Damien, is inevitably colored by the privilege I had of making an eight day retreat in the Holy Land just before that.

I was kindly received by the Franciscans in Jerusalem and Nazareth as one brother more. I was able to celebrate with them the 800th anniversary of the foundation of their order. Traveling with them to the places associated with Jesus, Mary and Joseph and doing that in a spirit of prayer and adoration, I encountered the lepers of Jesus, Francis and Damien.

I arrived in Rome thinking of the call given to the holy man from Assisi to “repair” the Church. It helped understand better on our own reparative spirituality that I must begin each day to live more deeply.

I came up against the heaviness of the Vatican ecclesiastical institution, surely necessary but perhaps overdone, especially when you contrast that with the holiness of the five new saints and the people that really wanted to participate and who had come from all over the world. Why so many precious stones, when what are more important are the living stones of the spiritual temple that Saint Peter speaks to us of?

Our prayer vigil could not have been better prepared. There were so many who kept arriving and it was very difficult, if not impossible, to organize everything perfectly with so few human and material resources. What I took away from it were some particular aspects that were important for appreciating the experience of those days.

First, even though we were together to joyfully celebrate Damien, at no time was the absolute centrality of Jesus forgotten. He was present in our midst in a very special way during those days.

The second, the internationality of the Congregation: we were brothers and sisters, priests, religious and laity together as one family, relating to one another simply, brothers/sisters gathering, those who already knew one another and those who had previously never met.

The attitude of our two Superiors general, each giving space for the other and coming to meet everyone with joy, warmth and simplicity and at the same time speaking to us profoundly.

The highpoint for me was the Eucharist of Thanksgiving on Monday the 12th, with Cardinal Daneels presiding and so many participating. It was well organized especially considering the large number of concelebrants, bishops, priests, sisters and brothers. And so we were able to celebrate the Passover of Jesus and that of Damien. There was nothing pretentious about it. Everything was done with calm. There was really a family feeling. Everyone was able to go to communion. This is the Church that I love.

Surely, the effort of all who were more involved in the preparation and celebration was outstanding and evident in a special way on that day. There was no need for a bureaucracy in

contradiction with the very sense of the Eucharist or with the meaning of the lives of those canonized and unlike Sunday; everyone who wished was welcome to the family table.

Finally, I want to offer a word of thanks first for Fr. Angel Lucas, then for Bruno Benati and finally for Alfred Bell. Thanks for everything.

My Experience of the Canonization of Father Damien



Fr. Krzysztof Wasiuk ss.cc.

The first feeling that I experienced when I heard about the canonization of Blessed Father Damien, was great joy and a great desire that it happen soon. From the very beginning I wanted to be present for it. When we heard the date of the canonization I shared my joy with my friends and those with whom I work.

Damien is very well known in Poland, especially among the clergy and religious. When the laity hear us speak of him and they get to know him by way of film or books, the reaction is always one of respect and admiration for such a hero.

Speaking of the days of the canonization, my first pleasant surprise was to see the church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel filled with adolescents and young people from our Sacred Hearts school in Spain, come together to pray and participate in a presentation on Father Damien.

The vigil, the evening before the canonization in Santa Maria sopra Minerva, was filled with symbolism. The most moving moment for me was the procession with the reliquaries and objects associated with father Damien: his tools, his hat and especially the funeral pall, the sign of his sacrifice and his gift of himself to the very end. It made me think of my own perpetual profession. I also lay prostrate in the form of the cross under the funeral pall as my religious brothers changed Psalm 51.

During the vigil there was a palpable atmosphere of joy and thanks for the figure of this great missionary who had brought together so many brothers and sisters of the Sacred Hearts as well as so many other people attached to our Congregation. The vigil was a great grace that allowed us to experience the internationality and the multi-cultural face of the Congregation. At the same time it showed forth our unity in one charism, expressed in so many different ways.

On Sunday, after the canonization, we went to the ERGIFE hotel and continued the celebration with an Agape. That was the first time that we could really appreciate the large group of ss.cc. brothers and sisters that had come together from all over to be with Damien. Afterwards we visited the Generalate and we had an opportunity to see the museum and everything there related to Damien and our founders.

On Monday we celebrated the Mass of Thanksgiving in the Basilica of Saint John Lateran at which the Cardinal Primate of Belgium presided. These words from his homily are engraved on my memory: the world of today is ready to hear us speak about charity and helping those in need, but not about the love of God, which is the source of all love. I remembered that that was also my experience during the five years that I had worked in Austria.

Very often people admire the heroism and the love of someone like Father Damien but they do not ask themselves about the source of that love. And yet that is a question that cannot be ignored.

Damien himself gives us the answer to that question, ***"Holy Communion, being the bread of the priest, I am happy, very content and resigned to the somewhat exceptional situation that Divine Providence has placed me in. Without the constant presence of our divine Master in my poor chapel I would never be able to persevere, uniting my destiny with that of the lepers of Molokai."***

That witness of Damien is an important indication for where we also must seek the strength and security in the journey of our own apostolic religious life.

To finish this brief reflection I would like to indicate what has been for me the greatest joy associated with the canonization of Father Damien. My greatest joy is that the canonization has become for me an opportunity to draw closer to the person of Saint Damien of Molokai and, reflecting on his life, I now see my own religious life in a new way. I am sure that will allow me one day to exclaim as he did, ***"How sweet it is to die a child of the Sacred Hearts!"***

The Canonization of Father Damien

Camille Sapu Malangu ss.cc.



After my trip to Rome for the canonization of Father Damien, Radek asked me to write something about my experience. I would be lying if I did not say that the three days were full of unforgettable gifts and memories.

Saturday, October 10 we had the prayer vigil. I was moved by the number of people present. That morning I had gone with the liturgy team and I had seen how big the church was. That evening for the vigil, I was flabbergasted, there was no room. The atmosphere of the service, the symbols used for the life of Saint Damien and the meditation by Father General were a great help to me in celebrating the canonization. I have to say a word about the joy of being together from the four corners of the world and from so many cultures. You could feel it. It was evident not only in the many languages but also in the various forms of dress: from French Polynesia to our African sisters and of course Hawaii. It was quite a sight.

Sunday, October 11 was the day of the canonization itself. It was a beautiful day beginning for me that morning in the Generalate. Everyone was on time to take the bus and you could see the joy and thanksgiving on everyone's face. I would have to say that a day like that happens but once in a lifetime. Once on the bus, it was the joy I felt within that kept me moving. Even if we had to wait a long time to enter Saint Peter's Square, it was as if my watch no longer worked. Time seemed to stop because all I wanted to do was get there, no matter the hour. When I saw the crowd come from all over, not only for Damien but also for the other four saints, I said a great thanks to God. I understood that the saints are really the friends of God and men. They become our intercessors because they lived our human condition. They are an example of faith for us because they showed that faithfulness to the Gospel is possible. Really, I felt so small before that great mystery of holiness. At the same time, I understood that God lets us enter that mystery if we put his will first. What did Damien do that was so special? He put God's will first and manifested God's mercy toward those forgotten on Molokai. I have to say that the form of the liturgy was not all that pleasing and I recognize my own limits due to the Latin and the seeming coldness. But to know that my brother Damien is a saint was a great joy that helped me forget the sun beating down on me.

I have to say a word about the meal shared at the Hotel Ergife (I think that's how you spell it) It was an incredible experience of brother/sisterhood. Everyone was beaming with joy and happiness.

Monday October 12 there was the Mass at the Basilica of Saint John Lateran. I was so touched by the symbols presented at the offertory, offerings from all five continents. From fruit of the earth to palm leaves and a trumpet and icon of Damien. They all showed how difficult it is to contain the richness of Damien's life in the same "box." I know and I believe that Damien's life will always be a sign of God's love for our world, in every time and place. Human beings are not called to live alone, excluded or abandoned by their own kind. The example of Saint

Damien of Molokai teaches us to be close to those who have nothing, whoever they might be. What is most important is the human person and the human family.

May God help us to be brothers and sisters to our fellow humans!

There are Men Who Leave a Mark that cannot be Erased, Others leave wounds that cannot be Healed.

Arnoldo Fernández Castañeda.ss.cc.



Damien was a man who left his mark: life, justice, hope, love, peace, mercy, goodness, brotherhood. This is what brought us together from all over the world for such an important moment in the life of our Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

This is what I experienced in the liturgies that we celebrated together in Rome as well as in Louvain. It did not just draw me closer to the story of Damien but to the Congregation itself. One could see that the mission of the ss.cc. community and the life of our brother Damien have touched the lives and the history of many people, not only ss.cc., but entire peoples who today follow the figure of one man who left a mark and fought for the dignity of the weakest and most forgotten of society.

I saw it in each of the liturgies. We were not only there to thank God for another saint being raised to the altars but to revitalize our religious commitment to the one who calls us by name and who reveals himself in people like Damien.

As a religious I now feel more committed to my community, my people and those people who need me, men, women and children who are affected by new forms of leprosy that violate them and threaten their rights. For that reason, such a great liturgical event has importance. Having a saint in our community is a source of deeper commitment.

Damien cannot just remain on an altar to be venerated. No, his life, both personal and spiritual, must lead us to go to those who need us, beginning with those who live next door. If not, our life will not speak to those young people who want to serve God in the consecrated life.

Damien set out on his journey to accompany those who were rejected by society. He became involved with them to help them rediscover their dignity. What are we doing? Who are those rejected today and who need our help?

What Happens to a Mexican in the Vatican

Salvador Carlos Mendoza Mendoza ss.cc.



The canonization of our brother Damien was a great experience of living faith. How difficult to be able to describe the personal experience, as each of us has his own of this beautiful event. However I will try to share something of what I experienced in those three days.

I found myself in our ss.cc. Generalate. Everything was enthusiasm, joy, expectation, work, brotherhood and prayer. Brothers from all the continents filled the rooms of our house. The brothers of the General Government, the Postulator, and the rest of the local community along with those working there created this joyful atmosphere. Leaving for the Basilica of Santa Maria sopra Minerva on the afternoon of October 10, passing through the streets of Rome, was not just a tourist outing. We were going to encounter Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament along with hundreds of ss.cc. brothers and sisters and laity enthused about the spirituality and charism of our Congregation. The fatigue, the heat, the crowd, the thirst or the hunger did not prevent us from preparing ourselves spiritually for the following day and the celebration of the canonization. It was a vigil of reflection and prayer, very moving, in pure ss.ccc atmosphere and style. The family spirit was evident in each of those present. The Eucharistic adoration and the symbols of the relics of Damien provided the tone for the celebration.

Sunday morning the 11th was another time of joy, very different from the evening before. We were all there before 8:00AM trying get into Saint Peter's Square. There were some 50,000: children, youth, adult, elderly, religious, priests, we formed a large community ready to participate in the canonization of five new saints, among them Saint Damien of Molokai. For many it did not seem to make a difference that some were inside and others of us followed the ceremony by video and audio on the square. However, others, without knowing what they were thinking, were suffering under the hot sun. This was the case of the school kids who were next to us. What difficult challenges the church faces! We not only have to encourage the young, but see that they do not become discouraged when things like that happen. Jesus call to change hearts, institutions and society has to speak to their lives and hearts. The effort, the faith and the love of those who participated in this celebration, in which the Church officially recognized five new saints has to move us to renew our love for the young, as we disciples of the Lord desire to make present the kingdom of justice, peace, unity and truth that Jesus Christ wanted to win for us in his passion, death and resurrection.

The third day, on the morning of October 12, in Saint John Lateran the joy was evident. "Thanks for our new saint" would be the best description of what we did as we came together and filled the place, so old and so new, as we celebrated the wonderful event. In this third celebration, with ss.cc. symbols and images of Father Damien, we combined our ss.cc. family spirit with the solemnity of the liturgy in the best Roman style. Besides giving thanks to God for the canonization, that celebration also had a note of farewell for the hundreds present, for only

a few of those present and the brothers, sisters and some ss.cc. laity were present for the banquet.

Thanks to those who made the celebration possible. Thanks be to God. May we remain united in prayer and in the love of the hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Roma locuta; causa finita

Joaquín Garre Artés, ss.cc.



I always thought that someday I would have to go to Rome just like a soldier sometimes has to go to military headquarters. However the opportunity presented itself with the best reason imaginable. Damien, whom I had known since I was a child, the one who inspired me to follow Jesus and to leave everything to proclaim the Gospel, was going to become a hero for the whole Church acknowledged by everyone.

For that reason, the trip was not just tourism, it became a real pilgrimage. The luckiest of us travelled by plane but a special round of applause goes to the teachers, brothers/sisters and volunteers who went in the bus with the kids. The trip from Barcelona to Pisa took more than 14 hours and for those who came from farther even longer.

But the effort was more than compensated by what took place. The first event was the celebration for the young people. It was coordinated by Damiano Tonegutti, Pedro Gordillo and Yolanda de Gregorio, among others. The second moment was the celebration in Santa Maria sopra Minerva, led by the Superior General of the Congregation. The family atmosphere, the sense of being at home, was apparent once more when the choir from Hawaii started to sing of Damien.

Needless to say, the moment waited for and most important of the pilgrimage was Sunday, October 11, a date that will remain always in our memory. On that day thousands of us gathered on Saint Peter's Square. Unfortunately, some reason made the Curia move the celebration to the interior of the basilica. But even then everyone's enthusiasm was such that the celebration filled our hearts and we were able to accompany the five new saints to the honors of the altar and they became for us examples to follow and intercessors in heaven. A summer sun shone for the whole celebration and we were able to finally see the Pope, for the angelus, when he added some beautiful reflections on each of the new saints.

The climax of the day, especially for the brothers and sisters, was a great banquet in a restaurant, where the least part was the meal. Being together with so many brothers and sisters from all over the world became one of the high points of my life in the congregation. Two brothers, former superiors general were there. I had the good fortune to be at table with Pía, Paloma Aguirre, Mercedes Bayo, the sister of Rosa Ferreiro and her husband...what could be better? The Congregation nicely gave each of us a commemorative medal and card.

The afternoon ended with the first Mass in honor of the new saint in the Church of Montserrat, in via "Montserrat," where for the first time we heard the Mass sung in honor of Damien that the choir from Barcelona had composed for the occasion. Bonastra was the author. Their angelic voices did not disappoint and neither did Carlos Amigo, "our" Archbishop. Always so close to the Congregation and with his well known devotion to Damien, he presided at that first Eucharist.

Without a doubt the most spectacular event was the Eucharist on Monday. For this novice in things of Rome, the basilica of Saint John Lateran was overwhelming. I mean by that the size, the beauty, the splendor, the beauty of the statues and frescos, all the gold and the very meaning of the place, the chief church of all the churches for there are found the heads of Peter and Paul, who once persecuted are now symbols for all of Christianity.

The celebration, with Cardinal Daneels presiding, was another congregational feast. Brothers, sisters and laity filled the immense space. The music, the prayers, the variety of languages deepened the affection that all of us feel for that Belgian, a rough worker and a generous and merciful man.

Now back home, we have some sense of the meaning of it all. We feel a joy that renews us within and encourages us to continue the journey. I'd just arrived and a young man told me that he wanted to be a priest following the example of Damien... I could not help but be moved and see that Saint Damien was already working to capacity.

International Juniorate / Poitiers 2009



In October we began our international meeting in preparation for final vows. A beautiful experience of being in Poitiers, the cradle of our congregation, where our Founders opened their hearts and lives to God's Dream.

We had the grace to go on pilgrimage to Rome, to attend the celebration of the canonization of San Damian. For us, it was an experience that came to enrich our formation in this time when we are gathered from different countries and the 5 continents, to drink from the sources of our charism.

The life of Damien of Molokai questions us, challenges and encourages us "To Lose our Life" for the love Christ and of our neighbors.

The Saturday before the canonization we participated in the vigil and adoration in preparation for the canonization. The Basilica of Santa Maria Minerva was packed with the faithful. The beauty of meeting brothers and sisters from around the world and the presence of a large number of lay people impressed us and made us recognize that our brother Damian is a living witness of God's love not only for our ss.cc. family but for the whole Church. The little religious of Molokai was able to move crowds and challenge all of us...

On Sunday at the Cathedral of St. Peter our eyes were focused on the image of Damian erected in the Vatican and our hearts united to the whole congregation, sisters, brothers and lay people worldwide. His love for the poor is a sign of God's love for humanity.

We interviewed some sisters. These are their witnesses:

"For me it was very significant to participate of the canonization. Damien was one of the first important figures of the Congregation that I got to know. At that time in the parish of Fernando de la Mora where the brothers are, and where I met the Congregation, we started an SS.CC. missionary group, spreading the devotion to Father Damien. Today there are many

communities of youth in Fernando de la Mora, in the community "Cristo Solidario" and in the Sacred Hearts Parish, that know and love God and want to follow the example of Damian. In those times when I would see in magazines pictures from the beatification of Damien 1994, I sighed and thought how much I wanted to be there. Damian is for me an example of dedication and I would like to offer myself as he did. When I heard that I would participate in the meeting in Poitiers I looked at the calendar and saw that it coincided with the date of the canonization, the first thing I did was to go to the chapel and tell Damian: I do not know for others, but for me it is a miracle. I was thrilled to remember my dream to see Damian as a Saint. And now I had the opportunity to be in front of his portrait hanging from the window of the Vatican. His life challenges me even more now in this time of preparation for my final vows. Damian in his perpetual profession died to life under the black shroud, to live life more fully. I wish I could give my life for the glory of God and for the sake of my brothers and sisters.. "And today I say with everything that I am, that my life and my death may be for the glory of God." Ana Leissis ssc

"As a junior, this experience has marked my life. Before coming to Poitiers I worked hard at the SSCC School in Arequipa participating with teachers and students in preparing for the celebration of the canonization. At first I regretted not being with them that day but the Lord gave me the opportunity to be in Rome and to join in the celebration alongside many brothers and sisters from different parts of the world. To be in this meeting in Poitiers, and having been in the celebration of the canonization of Damian is for me a gift from God, an experience to renew my strength. I feel the Lord comes to meet me after having lived arid times of loneliness and difficulties in my formation. It was a very strong experience to arrive at the basilica and meet many known brothers and sisters. I felt very excited to see the great diversity of cultures united by the cause of the canonization. I could recognize and touch and see how the internationality of the ssc charism has reached to so many different places. I experienced that the congregation is bigger than my boundaries and that the love of God unites us, even though we are from such different places. I could glimpse the diversity and richness of our religious family. It is for me a joy to feel part of that family and witness the action of God in our midst, in the midst of our differences and weaknesses. Damian is still a missionary, bringing together different people. His life witness summons and challenges us. He calls us to go beyond our boundaries and give up everything for love. Damian continues to heal much leprosy in the present time." Luz Reyna ssc

"Damian's faithfulness to the Blessed Sacrament has brought me closer to Jesus especially in times of challenge. I thank God for so many thousands of people who appreciated and respected Damian's holy life at the canonization." Ivy Yim ssc

"First of all I would like to say that it was not easy to separate from the group of Poitiers 2009/ Juniorate, and leave for Spain even though only for two weeks, all because of visa problems. And at the end I had to accept that I would not be going to Rome to participate in the canonization of Fr. Damian. The day of the canonization, I was in Spain (Enriqueta Aymer community). It was a great opportunity for me to know more sisters in the congregation in different communities. I spent more time in praying for all the sisters and for the young people to be interested in religious life (for more vocation) especially to our Congregation. Even though I was not in Rome for the canonization, I felt that I was present there among the people. The sisters and I were able to follow the whole celebration via television. I was very happy to see Jeanne Cadiou reading the First Reading and I also saw clearly Brigid, Rosa, Alicia and other sisters. I did not understand fully the whole celebration but whenever I heard the name of Fr. Damian, my heart was moved and excited. By seeing so many people from different nationalities, brings me to the awareness that Damian does not only belong to SS.CC. family but to the whole world. He gave himself totally to the marginalized and he loved them to the

end. I am grateful for the life of Damian who is now a Saint, for his love, faith and service. It gives me new light, strength and inspiration to commit myself to the call of God and totally dedicate my life for the service of God. The most beautiful words I cherish from Damian are: "I am happy to die as a child of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary". I thank God for this grace." Morta ssc

For us Juniors gathered in Poitiers, the testimony of Damian encourages us to give our lives without fear, to love until the end to the smallest and to those that suffer most. Undoubtedly, Damian is a gift from God to the Church and especially for our ssc. family

To recognize Saint Damian as our brother is a joy, but above all a commitment and a challenge to give our lives like him. We entrust to Damian our provinces, our apostolic work. We ask him for his generous intercession for each of us.

May his life, his commitment and his generous love motivate our lives and help us in our consecration to the Lord in this religious family.

Communication Team Romeka, Brigida, Gislaine

Welcome onto the Eucharist in thanksgiving for the canonization of Father Damien

(the Basilica of St. John Lateran, 12.10.09)

Rosa María Ferreiro ss.cc.



Dear friends, brothers and sisters who are experiencing the joy having seen Fr. Damian written into the book of the saints:

On behalf of the Congregation, welcome to this Mass in which we express our thanksgiving to God for the gift of the canonization of Fr. Damian, first child of the Sacred Hearts proclaimed a saint by the Church.

Yesterday we have lived an unforgettable day that continues today in this celebration to be presided over by Cardinal Danneels, archbishop of Malines-Brussels.

Although Damian made himself one of many among the sick of Molokai, he always kept in his heart the love for his homeland and his family of origin, from which, as he expressed in his letters, he so wanted to have news.

Let us share in

Homily of Cardinal Danneels in Saint John Lateran

October 12, 2009

Cardinal Godfried Marie Jules Danneels



Do not be frightened

The Church has canonized Father Damien. He is a saint because of his heroic life in the service of God and the poorest of the poor. Today the Church has confirmed this and has proposed Damien for the world's veneration. He is someone that we can follow. He no longer only belongs to the leprosy patients of Molokai but to the world and to all men and women.

What would Damien say to us today? Very simply, he would say the same thing that Jesus says: "follow me." We want to do that but how? What do we do now in our world and in our church? It may seem surprising but he can tell us somethings that we would never have expected. The Church has problems in our world today: secularization, the decreasing number of people who go to Church, few vocations. All of that can discourage us and even cause us to become bitter. Often we feel like the disciples in the boat in the midst of the storm. Jesus is asleep in a corner and the disciples cry out, "Lord, do you not care that we are sinking?" And he answers them, "why do you have so little courage, do you not believe?" (Mk. 4:38 ff) Later he reminds them, "Do not fear, little flock." (Lk. 12:32)

Do you know what the sickness of our time is? It is not the problems that make us sick. It is fear, we are afraid. Very afraid. Five times greater than any problem is our fear.

Take risks: I don't dare

Damien did not know fear. It began very early when he had just begun his religious life. His brother Pamphile was chosen to go to the mission in Hawaii but he fell sick. His brother Joseph said, "It's my turn, I'll go." And he went. He had no idea what awaited him. But he was not frightened. The one who wants to follow Damien is not frightened. He dares to take risks that he can not foresee. Damien did not say, "Too bad for Pamphile but there will be someone else to take his place." If we want to follow Damien, we cannot be afraid to step out. But like Damien, we have to have faith. Faith casts out fear. Are we frightened of taking risks? That paralyzes us.

There will be a better field to sow somewhere else: "I'm not sowing here."

When the bishop asked for volunteers to go to Molokai to work with those suffering from leprosy, Damien knew what it would be like. Molokai was the island of death. It would mean working in a place without hope. But he went. If we want to follow Damien, we cannot choose where we would prefer to work. We work where we find ourselves. We cannot be afraid of the kind of place. But we have to believe. Faith banishes the fear of the unknown. Don't we complain too much about the quality of the land where we have to sow? Nothing grows here. We go on dreaming of some golden age in the past or of some imaginary future. But there is only one place where we can work: our Molokai.

It is a hopeless work: “I am not doing that.”

Once he landed on Molokai, Damien had no desire to turn around and leave. Even though he had all the reasons in the world to lose hope. There was no medicine to treat leprosy and among those living on Molokai selfishness, immorality and violence reigned. The only law was: save yourself. Each one looked out for him/herself. There was no future for those suffering from leprosy. Damien was not afraid to work in a hopeless situation. But he had to believe and to love freely. Damien did not complain of the uselessness of it all. And what about us? Are we always sad and hardly ever happy when we see the situation of the Church and the faith where we live? What do we do more: complain or sing? We are afraid of despair.

My incompetence and my weakness: “I can do that.”

Neither was Damien afraid of himself. Sometimes he must have felt, “How can that happen, Lord, I am just one poor man.” He knew his faults: his stubborn character, his tendency to do things his way, his hidden pride, his desire to do everything and many times leave things unfinished. But he was not afraid of his shadow, the dark side that every human being has within. He knew that God’s grace was much greater. He was not afraid of himself and what about us? Many times we feel weak and incompetent. And we tell ourselves, “That’s not going to work with me.” Nor with the Church today. We strike our breast and we accuse the Church and ourselves of faults committed and we forget that much good has also been done. Where does such masochism come from? Nothing would be enough. We forget that Saint Paul, looking at himself, said “When I am weak, then I am strong.” And many times it is just a way of hiding our pride with the mask of false modesty.

Speak of God?: That’s not done. We should not do it.

There is still something else that causes us great fear. We are afraid of saying and showing clearly, without complexes or arrogance, that we believe in God, that he is the source of our hope, that we love him. We do good but we refrain from saying that the good that we do comes from God’s grace. We are very fearful of showing that we are believers and of accepting that the source of power to be good is God. Doing good, yes, of course. To be tolerant, of course. But to show what is our source and our motivation for doing and being, we do not dare. It’s as if we are embarrassed to say what is the well from which we draw our water. We do not steal the grace of God, we receive it, it is free for everyone. Damien was not afraid to speak of God and to let others know the source from which he drew strength to do what he did. In one of his letters he writes, “ Without the constant presence of Our Divine Master on the altar in my poor chapel, I would never be able to remain faithful to my decision to share the lot of the lepers of Molokai. Because of Holy Communion, which is the daily bread of the priest, I feel happy, I have much joy and I am resigned to remain in this situation, where in a particular way Divine Providence has deigned to place me.” Damien was not afraid to say, “God.” He would not understand why we do not speak of him. He would not understand our silence.

Today Damien is saying to each one of us, “Have no fear.” Do not be afraid to take risks. Do not be afraid of the place where God has called you to work. We cannot choose our Molokai. Do not be afraid to work in situations that seem to be hopeless. Do not be afraid of your own faults and weaknesses. Do not say, “That’s not going to work with me.” But above all, do not be afraid of speaking of the source of our strength and our courage: God and his Good News. We must not speak in hieroglyphics, losing half of what we want to say by our cryptic language, leaving to others to guess what we mean. Revelation is not playing hide and seek.

Thank final in the Eucharist in thanksgiving for the canonization of Father Damien

(the Basilica of St. John Lateran, 12.10.09)

Javier Álvarez-Ossorio ss.cc.



Let me finish with a short and incomplete word of thanks. Thanks to all the brothers and sisters that contributed in any way to preparing the celebration, here or in the various provinces and communities in different parts of the world. Thanks to all our friends who in one way or another have made Damien known and loved: members of the Secular Branch, media professionals, choirs and musicians, artists, travel and event coordinators, pilgrims etc. Thanks to the Generalate community in Rome, who with great talent and generosity welcomed visitors, took care of the many practical details and prepared the liturgies.

And very special thanks, in the name of the whole Congregation, to those who have given so much to advance the cause of Damien. I am thinking especially of the former postulators, Angel Lucas and Emilio Vega, who were with us in Rome during these days. I want to remember also Bruno Benati, who died last year just at the very time that the miracle for Damien's canonization was approved. I think of the former Superiors General, Pat Bradley and Enrique Losada who were also able to be with us. And Alfred Bell, our present Postulator General, who did so much to bring to conclusion the canonization process and who saw to the infinite number of details involved in the celebrations we have just had. Thanks from the bottom of my heart.

May Saint Damien intercede for his Congregation and may the example of his faith and his profound love for the excluded inspire us and help us be converted so as to better serve as God would want.

Louvain, October 17, 2009

Juan Carlos Tinjaca ss.cc.



Once the date of Damien's canonization was announced, work began to organize the celebration of the great event here in Louvain. Ideas began to circulate in the Damien Today project. The announcement of the Year of Damien was one of the first initiatives. The Louvain deanery and city hall also began to plan. Along the way the government of the Province of Flemish Brabant got on board. There were different dates and ideas, but in a meeting of the three groups they agreed to have just one celebration on October 17. It was an ideal date for the Congregation because brothers and sisters already in Europe for the canonization could also be present.

Meetings began to multiply, the details were examined to the nth degree, e-mail from the deanery never stopped. There was talk of Plan B in case of rain. The city government made itself completely available to the organizers of the celebration. Preparation was so detailed that nothing could go wrong.

Some days before, the city was decorated with flags and banners reading, "Damien inspires." Photos, mainly those of the transfer of his mortal remains to Belgium, were around at strategic points. Louvain became "Damien City."

October 17 arrived. In the Damien Center there had already been movement a few days previous with the arrival of chasubles for the some 80 concelebrants among them 30 ss.cc. and the arrival of international guests. Of course some were concerned as they looked skyward. Drizzle and clouds led to some consideration of the undesirable Plan B. But in the end the weather was good, for Belgium anyway.

At 4:30 the procession began from the Damien Center to the Church of Saint Peter in the heart of Louvain. A large photo of Damien was carried by a group of scouts. There was a band, a group carrying the flags of Tremolo, a group from French Polynesia and a long line of priests and others. It made one think of the procession with Damien through Louvain in 1936. The Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Malines-Brussels presided accompanied by the Superior General of the Congregation and the Dean of Louvain.

When we arrived at the Church of Saint Peter, which was filled, the first part of the celebration began: a liturgy of the Word and the explanation of why we were there. In 1936 the body of Damien was welcomed and spent the night in the same Church. There people had rendered homage to Damien before his body was transferred to the Church of the ss.cc. After that the procession once again set off along Brussels Street to the Church of Saint James where there is a statue of Damien. It was the first one made in Belgium. One of the canons of Louvain posed for it. At St. James the city mayor honored Damien, even asking pardon, for perhaps Damien would not have wanted to be so far from his brothers and sisters on Molokai. But having Damien in the city, said the mayor, was a reminder to all to remember and live the values that Damien lived, especially tolerance and dedication to those on the margins of society. Some children then read their witnesses and impressions of Damien.

After an offering of flowers, the procession set out once again, partly retracing its steps toward Damien Square in front of the Chapel of Saint Anthony, the ss.cc. Church in Louvain, where Damien's tomb is located. Perhaps there was not the same crowd as in 1936, but the faces of those present were very different and also their responses. Entering the square, the priests went to a nearby parking area to make space for the people coming after them, many more than expected. Some of the reverend fathers took advantage of the opportunity to go to the toilet, complicated enough in alb and chasuble.

At 7:00 PM the third part of the celebration began. Words of welcome from Father Franz Gorissen, Provincial of Flanders, set the context. This Church witnessed the entrance of young Josef De Veuster to the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts in 1859. It was from here that Damien left for the Sandwich Islands in 1863, passing through Paris and Bremen. During the celebration passages from Damien's letters were read in French, Dutch and English, the languages in which he wrote to his superiors, his family and his friends. Also presented were some things that spoke of Damien's life. A trumpet, a hammer, a medicine bottle, a cross and a coat reminded us of how Damien restored lost joy, built houses, cared for the sick, spoke of God's love for the little ones and was a sign of welcome for the sick of Molokai. As a sign of solidarity, the collection taken during the celebration will go to a project of our ss.cc. sisters in Mozambique, where they work with people with AIDS. In spite of being cold to the bone, more than 2,000 participated in the celebration right to the very end. Rosa, Superior General of our sisters, thanked the city and the local Church for the celebration. She did so in Spanish with an outstanding translation by Fritz Gorissen. Father General then spoke in French adding his thanks to that of Rosa. A little word from them in Flemish would have been nice.

Afterwards everyone was invited to visit the final resting place of Saint Joseph Damien De Veuster, as he is known officially, Father Damien to all of us. A small reception in city hall ended a day that more than fulfilled the expectations of those who did so much to prepare.

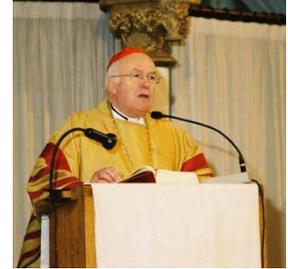
Photos of the celebration in Louvain can be found at:

<http://picasaweb.google.com/heiligeharten>

Homily of Cardinal Daneels in the Basilica of Koekelberg, Mass of Thanksgiving, Brussels

October 18, 2009

Cardinal Godfried Marie Jules Daneels



Father Damien has been canonized. What he has always been the Church has now solemnly declared. Now Damien is a worthy example to follow. He has been presented to the whole world as such. He, who was already listed in the book of heroes, is now inscribed in the book of saints beloved of God. We give thanks to God for this new saint, because it is not men who make a saint. It is the work of God. It is grace.

As each dew drop reflects the firmament in its own special way, so does each saint. He shows forth a facet of the infinite perfection of God. Looking at the saints is like reading a book about the qualities proper to God. We look at the saints to see God, to follow him.

How can we imitate Damien?

Saying yes to God's calls that we do not expect

Damien's life is full of the unexpected, twists and turns and questions. His older brother Pamphile, who was supposed to go to the mission, gets sick. Damien immediately says, "It's my turn. I'm going." He could never have foreseen that. He went. Some time later, he hears his bishop ask in a sermon if someone wanted to go to the island of the dead to live among those with leprosy. "For a short time," says the bishop. And Damien went. That also, he could never have foreseen. Damien says "yes" to unexpected questions because for him, those situations are not mere chance. No they are questions from God. Such things happen in the life of each one of us, things we could never foresee. Things are asked of us that we would never have thought of or expected. Damien would tell us to say "yes" because in such situations it is God who is speaking.

Don't run away

Damien could no longer leave Molokai. He had become a leper. Without planning or wanting it, he had become one of them. Perhaps he had a feeling beforehand that it would happen for very early on in his time there he wrote, "we lepers." He stayed with the people, his people. He could not heal them, he had no way to. But what he could do was stay with them. When we can do nothing else, there is always one thing that we can do: stay, remain and love. The one who loves never runs away. To remain at the bedside of someone who has no hope of getting better is the purest form of love. Damien says to us today, "Don't run away, even if there is no hope left."

Believe and act

Damien took to heart the words of the apostle James, "Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding yourselves." (James 1:12). Faith is down-to-earth, concrete, resourceful and

effective. Damien did everything for his people: he offered them medical help, he built a church, he organized a musical group, he created a community from a group without God and without law, he wove the fabric of a society and he made the place livable, socially, religiously and culturally. Perhaps he got that sense of active faith from his family, in the soil of Tremelo. For in our land faith always has become incarnate in the various kinds of work: social works, schools, hospitals, and church groups. Is it any accident that Cardijn was born among us? To see, judge and act. Damien would say to us, "Without works faith is dead."

For the one who believes there is always hope

Damien never looked for the fruit of his work. We could say that heaven was very close to Molokai. But he never said, "There is nothing to do here. I'm headed for the other side. Here I can sow but I will never see the harvest." Damien thought, "For the one who believes there is always hope and there are no impossible situations." It is clear that this came from his Christian faith and not just from some natural persistence or stubbornness. He drank from another well. He knew that "with God nothing is impossible" but certainly only with God.

Each time has its problems and its incurable diseases. The border is always moving farther but when we overcome one sickness, the next one is right around the corner. Every epoch has those who are rejected, marginalized, the disposable. They are numberless: alcoholics, drug addicts, those with Aids, those with acute depression, the young without hope who choose death, foreigners and refugees. And there are many more that we never think of but the majority of our society just ignores them. Before that reality Christian charity is always needed. It throws out a net. For the one who believes, there is always hope for there is love.

Say that your strength comes from God

Christians today do a lot for their neighbor but there is something that they fear: to dare to say openly that they draw their strength and their courage from their faith in God. As followers of Damien, we must dare to say regularly and clearly that we believe in God, that we hope and that we live in his love. We have to do that without complexes and without arrogance. We do much good, but we almost never dare to name God. It is not fashionable today. How often we are afraid to show that we believe in Him and that He is the source of our strength. Love for our neighbor should not cut short our love for God. Why are we embarrassed to let others see and know the spring at which we drink? Are we more modest if we say nothing? Or is it rather a hidden sort of pride for we keep the pride or embarrassment within, just for ourselves.

Damien was not afraid to say the word "God" nor to speak of the source of his strength. He wrote that he was able to do everything because of God's grace. In one of his letters he says, "Without the constant presence of our Divine Master on the altar in my poor chapel, I would never be able to remain faithful to my decision to share the lot of the lepers of Molokai. But because of Holy Communion, which is the priest's daily bread, I feel happy, I have much joy and I accept this situation in which divine providence has deigned to place me." Damien was not afraid to let others know his source. He would not understand why we today remain silent about God.

Brothers and sisters, saying yes to unexpected questions, staying and not running away, believing and working, never saying "there is nothing to do here" and never being silent about what keeps you going, never keeping a deadly silence when we have to speak of God... This is what it means to imitate Damien. That was why he was canonized. Let us ask his intercession that we might have that grace. For he is not only a hero to admire but also a saint to whom we can pray.



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