



Blessed Eustaquio: *Healing and Reconciliation*

"THE SICK AND THE OLD"

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Today, I think that the Congregation of Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary still has a Good Heart for People and the World.

Why? How? Where? These questions are appropriate and for the religious of today good to ask. Do you know why? Because of the materialistic modern era of globalization, IT and life style, religious are almost like secular people. The religious are always looking up, and not looking down to the grass roots: to serve the poor, the widow, the elderly, the orphan, the sick and many faceless people abandoned by the world today.

Who will serve them? Who will take care of those who are sick, poor, old, homeless kids, refugees etc.? These people are waiting for our hands to touch and to embrace them. Is not our Congregation called by God to witness his love to the people and the whole world; to bring peace and joy? So it is very interesting, but also very challenging for our mission today. We have to reflect again and again on our calling to be priests and to be religious. Why do you want to be a priest or a religious? Why do we have to serve the people? How do we reach out to the sick, the poor, the elderly and the widow/orphan? What are we going to do? Where is our mission going to take us next? Let us remember in our daily life to take care of the people of God, and to do it, as God's will, not as our own ideas, dreams etc...

SAINT DAMIEN AND BLESSED FR. EUSTAQUIO

The two big names today in our Congregation are Saint Damien of Molokai and Blessed Fr. Eustaquio, our missionary to Brazil. In touching the people by their presence, their hearts and hands, they did something very small. Now they are the biggest persons in the world. Saint Damien and Blessed Fr. Eustaquio cured many people of their sickness and disease. I know something special about Saint Damien of Molokai. He reached the lepers through his

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tobacco garden. Even now, those tobacco plants are still growing on the land around the beach in Kalawao. One day, I was cleaning the area where these plants are and I had to keep the deer from coming to eat the tobacco leaves.

For the needs of the lepers, Fr. Damien also introduced pigs to Molokai. Still today in both Kalaupapa and Kalawao there are pigs. When I was ministering in Molokai, I was in charge of feeding them. I was feeding 35 (the whole family, you might say: mama pigs, daddy pigs and the kids). But nobody is taking care of them. They only knew Fr. Ambrose. When I came to feed them, the pigs came to me. We gathered together. If other people went there, the pigs ran off. This mission serving the pigs was both funny and pleasant. This was part of my mission and my religious life in Molokai. As members of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, we always need to learn and to imitate the religious life of Fr. Damien and Fr. Eustaquio who always touched the People of God in the vineyard of Lord. Even though it is a simple way, or only a small mission, nevertheless it is really meaningful for the people and for our God. Praise the Lord and thank God.

THE SICK AND THE OLD

I have had many experiences with the sick, the old and the poor. When I look back on my ministries, I always liked working with the poor and for the grass roots people. I love it. I think that is my calling by God. In living the same simple life, I fulfil God's purpose for me. I know many parishioners and they know me. I know their homes and their needs. I call the people by name, and they feel very touched by this. My style in the ministry now is the same as before. I like to visit the people in their homes, their work, their shops, just for a while and to say "hi." For now, my only concern is to serve the sick, the poor, the old etc. just to be present and to listen to what they talk about. Sometimes there is a phone call from a family, or from the hospital, asking me to come to pray, to bless and to give the anointing of the sick. I must be ready any time to serve what the people need. Never say, "I will come later" or "I will come tomorrow". For this service, we must do right away.

I always feel pity and compassion for the sick. They suffer too long when they get sick, like Fr. Van Dongen sccc, who for almost four years was just lying in bed. What to do? For me I will just visit the sick often and pray with them. The sick often ask, "Why doesn't God answer me?" "What is my sin?" The old would say: "I want to go to God soon, but until now God never called me." In such a case, I would just listen to their struggle, to their bad experiences with the illness. Finally, I would pray and bless them. They say to me: "Thank you so much Fr. Ambrose. When are you coming back again?"

In our pastoral today, we must be more outgoing in order to meet the people, especially the sick and the old. Let us love our Congregation, our mission, our religious life and praise the Lord. Still One Heart in Jesus and Mary! Amen.