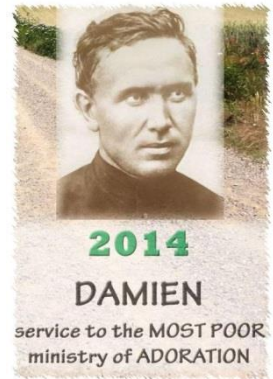


The Poor Christ

Javier Álvarez-Ossorio ssc
Superior General

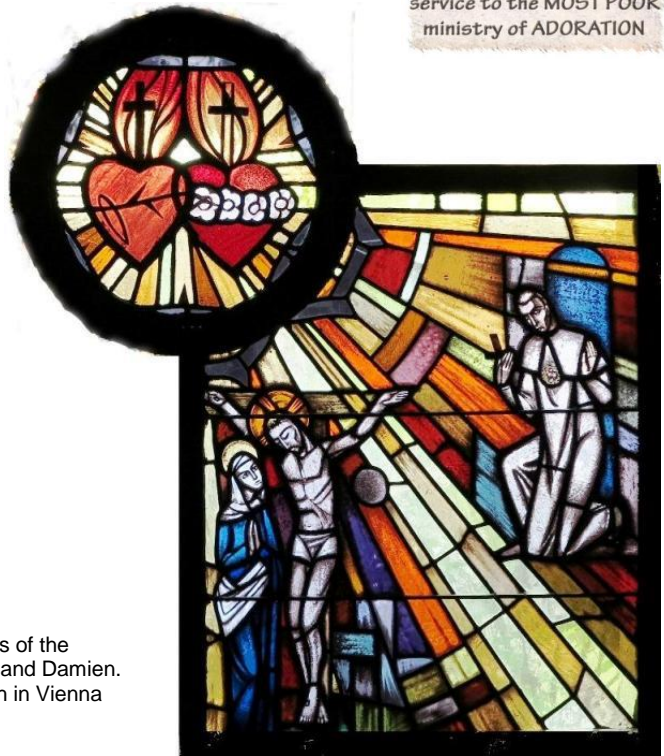


INFO SSCC Brothers No 79 – 10 April 2014

**The One we follow,
this itinerant preacher who
had nowhere to lay his head,
who shared a common purse
with his disciples,
who was born
in humble circumstances,
died naked
hanging from a cross.**

38th General Chapter (2012)
The System of Contributions and
Congregational Financial Solidarity, n° 1

Stained glass of the
"Four Ages" and Damien.
SSCC Parish in Vienna
(Austria)



Only in the contemplation of Jesus crucified do we find the real reason for wanting to be poor.

Looking at Jesus naked, nailed to the cross, stripped of everything, enkindles within us love and faith.

Love seeks to be close to the one loved; it desires to share his fate, his life, his journey. Jesus tells his friends, "Where I am you also may be." (Jn. 14:3) We want to be with Jesus, in his poverty, his abandonment, his cross.

"Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me." (Mt. 25:40) The love born of contemplating Jesus on the cross is also love for the poorest of his brothers and sisters. Jesus crucified reaches out his hand to us in the destitute and marginalized. They help us discover "wherein the true dignity of all human persons lies and where the authentic quality of life is to be found." (Const. 30.2).

The poor Christ presses us, with loving violence, to trust. To trust in the Father, into whose hands Jesus handed over his very being. To trust in poverty, overcoming the temptation to believe that only with a lot of sophisticated and expensive things will we be able to do what God wants of us. To trust that the work of God is done when it seems that everything is falling apart and nothing can be done, like Jesus on the cross. How difficult it is to believe this! Lord, increase our faith.

Looking at Jesus naked, nailed to the cross, stripped of everything, one begins to understand something of the peace and joy of Damien on his death bed, when after signing the last documents in which he handed over to the bishop everything he had, he exclaimed, "How happy I am to have given everything to Monsignor, now I die a poor man, for I have nothing of my own." (March 28, 1889) You brothers, who live more simply, who are among the poor and who give your time and energy to them, you know well this special kind of joy that is so difficult to explain to someone who has never had the good fortune of finding friends among the little people of our world.

Looking at Jesus naked, nailed to the cross, stripped of everything, I am bothered by my comfort, my fear filled caution, my worldliness, my exaggerated concern for my wellbeing, the luxuries I have (inaccessible to the large majority of humanity), the distance between the really poor and myself and in fact they are so close... There are always so many sensible and practical reasons for not being poor and not being really with them!

In these days when we are celebrating the Passion of Christ, his Paschal Mystery, in this year dedicated to Damien of Molokai during which we want to deepen our commitment to the poor and our ministry of adoration, I invite you, brothers, let us renew within our profession of the vow of poverty. Let us ask for the gift of being able to love poverty, to want to be poor and to be with the poor. I ask you to renew "the witness of a poverty freely accepted." (Thirty-eighth General Chapter, page 30) Out of love for Jesus crucified.

"A simple life-style in solidarity with the poor is a decisive factor for the vitality of our entire religious life," say the Constitutions (Const. 30.1). On the other hand, the lack of poverty deprives us of freedom; it robs us of apostolic energy and makes fraternal love grow cold.

Please reread pages 29-30 of the last General Chapter, where you will find a beautiful introduction to the document on financial solidarity. We are reminded there that our acceptance of poverty is founded on God's wisdom revealed in Jesus Christ. "The One we follow, this itinerant preacher who had nowhere to lay his head, who shared a common purse with his disciples, who was born in humble circumstances, died naked hanging from a cross." (n.1) "We religious of the Sacred Hearts are consecrated to live this ideal in imitation of the Master and inspired by the first generation of believers." (n. 3)

We cannot claim to be greater than the Master (Jn. 13:16). We are followers of the poor Christ.

Happy Easter!

