

... WITH AN ARDENT LOVE ...

Damien's Life

Damien's ardent love for Jesus already began to show in the early years of his formation in Louvain or in Paris. He chose the most difficult hours for his weekly nocturnal adoration, two or three in the morning, and he did not go back to bed afterward. His prayer time in chapel, including during the night, exceeded what was prescribed in the rule.

Also, in his first letters from the district of Puna, he wrote comparing his current life to that which he led as a novice: *"Instead of strict observance of the rule of silence, one has to learn to speak a variety of languages with a variety of people; instead of being directed, one has to direct others; most difficult of all is to maintain, amid a hundred and one miseries and trials, the spirit of meditation and prayer."* (Damien to the Superior General, Hawaii, November 1, 1864)

This brings to mind what Damien, as a young student, carved on a bench during a conference in Louvain *"Silence, recollection, presence of God"*.

Even the manual tasks that he did with the help of the leprosy patients were inspired and permeated by a profound religious sense: *"I'm not ashamed to be a manual laborer for the glory of God"* –he wrote to his family. *"The work habits I developed at home are of immense use to me here."* (Damien to his family, December 8, 1874)

Damien knew that he had contracted leprosy and for this reason his religious superior, Fr. Léonor Fouesnel, prohibited him from leaving the island of Molokai.

Damien wrote to his brother Pamphile sharing with him the pain of this measure and the comfort that he found at the feet of Jesus in adoration:

"I was recently banned by my superior from going to Honolulu but I surrendered myself to the Divine Providence and I am consoled by the only friend who never left me alone, that is our Divine Savior in the Blessed Sacrament. Often I made my confession at the foot of altar; there I look for the consolation for the difficulties that I kept in my heart. In front of Him and the statute of our Holy Mother I often grumble while asking to be cured." (Letter to Pamphile, November 26, 1885)

Damien's last letter, in February of 1889, two months before his death, was written to Doctor Swift, and he indicated his concern for some of the leprosy patients needing greater care:

"Jobo Puonua has been spitting blood since yesterday morning. Please spare a moment to go and see him- in the second house after that of Jack Lewis- and oblige your friend, J. Damien. In the same house you will find the dying woman whom I spoke to you about last night."

At your feet, Jesus

Here I bring you my tiredness and also my desire to serve you.

You also know that my passion for you and for those you entrust to me sometimes is tiring. I offer you the difficulties I have in being as compassionate with others as you, Lord, are with me.

With everything, good Lord, I present to you the people who entrust me with their lives and their sufferings. I am here in their name.

Help me to look upon and serve, with your compassion, the people who suffer, those I find difficult to accept and those you entrust to.



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“When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd.”

(Mk. 6:34)