

**MARTYRS OF MOLOKAI**

**FATHER DAMIEN, WHO POINTED THE WAY FOR BROTHER SERAPION.**

*The Living Death That is the Portion of the Apostles to the Lepers. The Awful Horrors That Are Linked With the Dreadful Disease.*

In the story of martyrs there is a strange interest, an interest that blinds and that holds until one finds oneself irresistibly attentive to their lives. If you have any serious work to do never take up the life of a martyr until you have completed it. Otherwise the work will suffer.

The Church for years has seen men go forth, laying aside all that was of value to them in the material world, give up their pleasures, their interests and their satisfaction to spread the truth of their fathers. It is the acceptance of the teaching, "Take up your cross and follow Me." Did the world ever witness a more heroic sacrifice than that which was made by Joseph de Veuster, "the little shepherd of Motouloa," whom ages have come to know as Father Damien, the apostle to the lepers? And can you more fittingly match any other person in history with this man than Brother Serapion, who has followed in the footsteps of Father Damien?

Let us review what Charles Warren Stoddard says of Father Damien.

There was born Jan. 3, 1860, Joseph (Damien) de Veuster, the seventh of eight children, of whom two were nuns and two were priests.

He was very early in life noted for the simplicity and purity of his character. Original sin was absolutely unknown to him. The sports of childhood did not attract him, yet he was a healthy, robust lad, not given to brooding nor caring to bug the earth even in wintry weather. He loved the fields that encircled his native village. He wandered there wrapped in infant reveries, a poet without passion, dreaming the dreams that no one but himself could interpret. He followed the sheep to their pastures and sported with the lambs, and he was known to all the shepherds thereabout and was called fondly and familiarly "the little shepherd."

The young De Veuster was in nowise discouraged by the life of a religious and its manifold trials and advantages. He was sent to the Cours Moyon at Braine-le-Comte, where he received a commercial education suitable for one who was likely to occupy the position his parents had intended him to fill. Not for one moment had he hesitated to comply with the wishes of his parents, and they, it seems, saw no other course for him to follow.

While he was at this school the Redemptorist Fathers gave a mission in the neighborhood. Joseph attended it. He was profoundly impressed. It was the awakening, as it were, of the spirit that slept no more, but inspired him to do and dare so long as his body was animated by the breath of life.

In 1883, while Father Damien was still in minor orders, his brother Pamphile, already a priest awaiting his appointment upon the mission, was directed by his superiors to prepare himself for the voyage to Hawaii, then better known as the Sandwich Islands. These beautiful Pacific islands had been placed in 1825 by Pope Leo XII. in the special care of the fathers of the "Piepus" congregation, their chief duty being the preaching of the Gospel to the heathen.

Father Pamphile received his commission with enthusiasm, but no sooner had he received it than he was prostrated by an attack of typhus fever.

Young Damien wrote at once to the superior general in Paris begging leave to take his brother's place on the mission to Hawaii and imploring the superior general "not to throw away the passage money." His prayer was granted. The superior in his own house had but one word to offer: "It is rather silly of you to go before you are a priest!"

On the feast of his patron, St. Joseph, March 19, 1864, Father Damien reached Honolulu, the chief port of the Hawaiian Islands. For more than five months he had been tossed upon the sea in a sailing vessel whose name he does not mention. A fierce gale was encountered off Cape Horn, and for many days the ship was beaten about among waves, strewn with the wreckage of ill-fated barks, itself in danger of foundering with all on board. There were ten sisters, besides Father Damien and his companions, in the devoted company that voyaged together.

For nine years Father Damien was stationed in Hawaii. His parish was a large one. Upon the back of a mule he followed mountain trails in rain or shine. He said Mass in turn at his several widely scattered chapels. These chapels he built with such help as he could command. He painted them, he decorated them, somewhat gaudily, to suit the tastes of the natives; he kept them in repair. There were 8,000 natives in his district, and of these he said:

"Well, I certainly love my savages who will soon be more civilized than Europeans. They all here know how to read and write and are quite well dressed on Sundays."

Amongst in the same breath Father Damien appealed to the bishop, reminding him that recent arrivals from Belgium had made the case clear enough. It was providential! It was a voice from heaven that called him! "Monsieur," said he, "here are your new missionaries; one of them can take my district, and if you will be kind enough to allow it, I will go to Motouloa and labor for the poor lepers whose wretched state of bodily and spiritual misfortune has often made my heart bleed with me."

Thus, in his thirty-first year, did

Father Damien voluntarily enter upon his mission among the lepers, a mission that was at last crowned with glorious martyrdom.

A reverend mother, who knew Father Damien when he was still a novice, said to Father Pamphile: "Your brother is a saint, a St. Aloysius; no one can see him serve Mass without being struck by his extreme devotion."

What would she have said had she seen him—as I did every morning during my last visit to the settlement—offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in his little chapel at Kalawau for a congregation composed of lepers? Even the acolytes who served him were lepers.

I don't care to dwell here upon the horrors of leprosy. Any one who knows aught of that most loathsome of diseases must realize what it was for Father Damien to meet it and mingle with it daily for many years, and for him to be well aware that sooner or later he must become one with them in the flesh, as he was one with them in the spirit from the first moment of their intercourse. A single brief quotation from "The Lepers of Motouloa" will suffice to picture what I saw in the hospital at Kalawau—what I shall never cease to regret having seen so long as I live.

"A corner of the blanket was raised cautiously, a breathing object lay beneath, a face a human face turned slowly toward us—a face on which scarcely a trace of humanity remained. The dark skin was puffed up and blackened. A kind of moss, gummy and glistening covered it. The muscles of the mouth had contracted and laid bare the grinning teeth. The thickened tongue lay like a ring between them. The eyelids curled tightly back exposing the inner surface, and the protruding eyeballs, now shapeless and broken, looked not unlike burst grapes."

For more than sixteen years Father Damien ministered to the spiritual and temporal wants of the lepers of Motouloa. For thirteen years he showed no signs of leprosy, but he felt always that sooner or later his hour must come and that he must die of leprosy among his people. At last I received a letter from him containing these appalling words: "Having no doubt myself of the true character of my disease, I feel calm, resigned and happier among my people. God alone knows what is best for my own satisfaction, and with that conviction I say daily fiat voluntas tua. Please pray for your afflicted friend and commend me and my luckless people to all servants of the Lord."

A few days before his death he said: "How good God is to have preserved me long enough to have two priests by my side to assist me in my last moments, and then to know that the good Sisters of Charity are at the hospital—that was my *Nunc dimittis*! The work of the lepers is assured. I am no longer necessary to them, so before long I shall go up yonder."

And now Brother Serapion follows in Father Damien's footsteps. He has contracted the awful disease from the lepers of Motouloa, among whom he is laboring, has accepted the sufferings which his step has entailed with the heroism worthy of any martyr and now awaits certain death—Boston Republic.

**Sugar-Coated Profanity.**  
A lady used the expression "Gee!" the other night. It had never occurred to her that this was taking the name of the Lord in vain, and probably few of the many who indulge in sugar-coated profanity realize that they are swearing. What is "Gee," though, but a euphemism for "Jesus?" "Dear me!" is nothing but the Latin "Deo Meo" (my God); "For land sake" is "For Lord's sake"; "Drat it!" is "God rot it!"; "Judas priest" is "Jesus Christ"; "Golly," "Gosh," "Gorry," etc., are only corruptions of "God"; "Darn it!" "Dash it!" "Ding it!" "Blame it," etc., are only variations of "Damn it." In short, there is probably not an expression of this sort that cannot be traced back to an oath for its origin. Notwithstanding this you will every day hear people using them thoughtlessly who would be terribly shocked by a genuine oath.—Western Publisher.

**The Reward.**  
There are a few lives that do not sooner or later come to their desert. Perhaps death has touched the home and the gray days, aching with loneliness, stretch before one endlessly. Perhaps brave ambitions have had to be laid aside and one's whole thought given to a narrow round of distasteful work. Perhaps, with powers crying out for expression, the rocky desert walls close in on every side and one is hidden wait, wait. Whatever they may be, this thing is sure—God's deserts are His teachers and full of His voice: no waste is pathless for His feet. Beyond Elijah's desert lay his greatest work and the friend that went with him to his journey's end. Beyond our desert lies something that God is waiting to give us.

**Live Truly.**  
If we live truly, we shall see truly. It is as easy for the strong man to be strong as it is for the weak man to be weak. When we have new perception we shall gladly disburden the memory of its hoarded treasures as old rubbish. When a man lives with God his voice shall be as sweet as the murmur of the brook and the rustle of the corn.

**Bishop Schinner.**  
The Very Rev. Augustine F. Schinner, vicar general of the Milwaukee archdiocese for several years, has been appointed by His Holiness bishop of the Superior diocese, recently created by the redvision of the Milwaukee province. The newly appointed bishop is forty-two years of age, and is a native of Milwaukee.

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