

Your Holy Friend of the Month

Saint Damien of Molokai



Charles Lwanga was a martyr and saint who lived in the late 19th century. He was born in the Kingdom of Buganda, located in what is now Uganda, and was a member of the Baganda people. At a young age, Lwanga converted to Catholicism and was later ordained as a deacon. Lwanga's mission was to spread the Christian faith in Uganda and to help protect young men from the harsh and often violent practices of the Bagandan king, Mwangi II.

Mwangi was known for his persecution of Christians, especially young men, and Lwanga worked tirelessly to protect and defend his fellow believers. In 1886, Lwanga and 22 other young men were martyred for their faith. Lwanga was burned alive along with his companions after refusing to renounce their faith and participate in a traditional Bagandan rite of passage known as "kwanjula."

In addition to his work as a missionary, Lwanga also worked to address issues of poverty and inequality, and he was committed to promoting fairness and justice for all people. Despite facing persecution and violence, Lwanga remained dedicated to his beliefs and worked to create a better world for future generations.

Lwanga's sacrifice and bravery inspired many people to convert to Catholicism and helped to spread the Christian faith throughout Uganda; his exemplary life continues to inspire people of all faiths to work for social justice and to stand up for the rights of the marginalized and disadvantaged. He is remembered as a patron saint of Catholic youth and is venerated as a symbol of faith, courage, and the power of love. Lwanga was canonized by Pope St. Paul VI in 1964.

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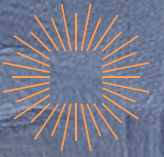
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Thrive For Life

30 W. 16th St. | New York, NY 10011
(212) 337-7544 | info@thriveforlife.org



My Sin, God's Mercy

By R. Lorenz, Jesuit Scholastic at
Ciszek Hall, Fordham University



A Pharisee and a Tax Collector

Luke 18:9-14

Jesus told a story to some people who thought they were better than others and who looked down on everyone else:

Two men went into the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood over by himself and prayed, "God, I thank you that I am not greedy, dishonest, and unfaithful in marriage like other people. And I am really glad that I am not like that tax collector over there. I go without eating for two days a week, and I give you one tenth of all I earn."

The tax collector stood off at a distance and did not think he was good enough even to look up toward heaven. He was so sorry for what he had done that he pounded his chest and prayed, "God, have pity on me! I am such a sinner."

Then Jesus said, "When the two men went home, it was the tax collector and not the Pharisee who was pleasing to God. If you put yourself above others, you will be put down. But if you humble yourself, you will be honored."

Questions for Reflection

- 1 What word, phrase or image caught my attention?
- 2 What feelings and thoughts do I have after reading the text?
- 3 Are there situations in my life where I behave like a Pharisee? Or a tax collector?
- 4 What do I want to tell and communicate to God from my innermost heart?
- 5 What do I feel when Jesus says to me, "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, but whoever humbles himself will be exalted."?

There's an old saying in the spiritual life: "Compare and despair." When our self-worth becomes wrapped up in how well we stack up against someone else, it's hard to know God's healing love and mercy. This is what Jesus was talking about with the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector.

Comparing ourselves to others can be dangerous in both directions. On one hand, when we judge ourselves to be "better" than someone else, we forget about our own faults and weaknesses. This was the trap the Pharisee fell into. Pharisees were highly respected leaders who liked to "show off" by trying to keep religious laws perfectly. But this didn't make them good people; it made them arrogant and unable to show respect and kindness to others. On the other hand, when we don't think we're as good as someone else, it can be easy to give in to resentment and despair, which are never from God.

The tax collector shows us a better way. At the time, tax collectors were known for cheating many people out of their money and were despised by the rest of society. But instead of pointing fingers or making excuses, this tax collector chose a simpler and humbler path. He was honest about who he was and what he had done and became completely dependent on God's love and mercy to help him do better.

So, the next time we're tempted to compare ourselves with others, let's ask for the grace to remember who we all truly are: loved sinners before God.



Daily Ignatian Examen

We invite you to prayerfully reflect:

Presence

Become aware that God's presence is active at each moment of your life, looking at you with love, desirous of speaking directly to your heart. How do you feel at this moment?

Ask

Ask God for the grace to see the ways God is working in your life.

Gratitude

Be grateful. Thank God for the gifts, both big and small of the day. What are you most grateful for today?

Review

Trust that God is with you at each moment of day, during the good and challenging moments. God never abandons you. What were the good moments of today?

What were the greatest challenges of today?

Respond

You are not stuck. Tomorrow is a new day. Ask God to give you the grace to be the loving and generous person you were created to be. What can you do tomorrow to be more generous and loving?

Conclude with the Sign of the Cross.



The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, Who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name.
Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Two Sons

Luke 15:11-32

Jesus told them yet another story: Once a man had two sons. The younger son said to his father, "Give me my share of the property." So the father divided his property between his two sons.

Not long after that, the younger son packed up everything he owned and left for a foreign country, where he wasted all his money in wild living. He had spent everything when a bad famine spread through that whole land. Soon he had nothing to eat.

He went to work for a man in that country, and the man sent him out to take care of his pigs. He would have been glad to eat what the pigs were eating, but no one gave him a thing.

Finally, he came to his senses and said, "My father's workers have plenty to eat, and here I am, starving to death! I will go to my father and say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against God in heaven and against you. I am no longer good enough to be called your son. Treat me like one of your workers.'"

The younger son got up and started back to his father. But when he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt sorry for him. He ran to his son and hugged and kissed him.

The son said, "Father, I have sinned against God in heaven and against you. I am no longer good enough to be called your son."

But his father said to the servants, "Hurry and bring the best clothes and put them on him. Give him a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. Get the best calf and prepare it, so we can eat and celebrate. This son of mine was dead but has now come back to life. He was lost and has now been found." And they began to celebrate.

The older son had been out in the field. But when he came near the house, he heard the music and dancing. So he called one of the servants over and asked, "What's going on here?"

The servant answered, "Your brother has come home safe and sound, and your father ordered us to kill the best calf." The older brother got so angry that he would not even go into the house.

His father came out and begged him to go in. But he said to his father, "For years I have worked for you like a slave and have always obeyed you. But you have never even given me a little goat, so that I could give a dinner for my friends. This other son of yours wasted your money on prostitutes. And now that he has come home, you ordered the best calf to be killed for a feast."

His father replied, "My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we should be glad and celebrate! Your brother was dead, but he is now alive. He was lost and has now been found."

Questions for Reflection

- 1 How do I feel when I put myself in the place of the older or the younger son?
- 2 The younger son lost his fortune. What have I lost in my life's journey? What would I like to find again?
- 3 Do I believe that God takes me in his arms with my whole life story like a loving father and does not ask about my guilt?

Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

R. Furlan, Thrive For Life Spiritual Mentor

So often when we pray, we worry about the state of our souls. We focus on our sins and wonder, "Am I going to heaven?" But in the Our Father, before he mentions sin, forgiveness, and temptation, Jesus mentions "our daily bread." After praising God's name and bowing to the importance of God's will, the very next thing Jesus acknowledges is our need for sustenance. God cares about our daily needs like food, clothes, and housing as much as He cares about the state of our souls.

Jesus knows that we can function well in the spiritual world when our basic physical needs are met. St. Paul says, "You surely know that your body is a temple where the Holy Spirit lives. The Spirit is in you and is a gift from God. You are no longer your own. God paid a great price for you. So, use your body to honor God." (1Cor 6:19-20).

Daily bread also means honoring our bodies with healthy food, activities, and rest. Anything that breaks down physical health is not the daily bread Jesus encourages us to ask for. This isn't a prudish, restrictive requirement of an uptight king. Jesus understands that our bodies are important, and with this mention, he honors them, inspiring us to do the same.

Our bodies, like the earth, wind, and sky, were created by God out of love. If we remember this every day, it will change our interactions with our own bodies and the bodies of others. Jesus' mention of our daily bread in such a prominent place in the prayer is deliberate and important to notice. It calls to mind Jesus' specific care for our daily needs and our opportunity to honor that with our lives.