

Your Holy Friend of the Month

Saint Damien of Molokai



Saint Damien of Molokai was a Roman Catholic priest who dedicated his life to serving the lepers of Molokai, Hawaii. Born in Belgium in 1840, Damien was the youngest of seven children. He was ordained as a priest in 1863 and joined the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, a religious order dedicated specifically to missionary work. In 1864, Damien volunteered to serve as a missionary in the Kingdom of Hawaii.

Upon arriving in Hawaii, Damien was assigned to the island of Molokai, where the government had established a leper colony. Leprosy, now known as Hansen's disease, was a highly contagious and incurable disease that was misunderstood and feared at the time. At the time, many people with leprosy were ostracized and sent to live in isolation on Molokai. Damien arrived on Molokai in 1873 and quickly went to work serving the physical and spiritual needs of the lepers. He built hospitals, churches, and homes for the residents of the colony and worked tirelessly to improve their living conditions. He also provided medical care, including performing surgeries, and preached to the lepers about the love of God.

Despite the harsh living conditions and the risk of contracting leprosy, Damien remained on Molokai for the rest of his life. He was eventually diagnosed with leprosy, but he continued serving the lepers until his death in 1889. Due to his selflessness and dedication, the Catholic Church canonized Damien as a saint in 2009. He is now known as the patron saint of outcasts and those suffering from Hansen's disease. His legacy lives on through the Damien and Marianne of Molokai Foundation, which works to improve the lives of those affected by Hansen's disease and to promote understanding and acceptance of the disease.

Become A Resident Scholar At Ignacio House Of Studies!

If you are passionate about your education and wish to continue your academic journey post-release, Ignacio House offers transitional supportive housing along with a holistic suite of services for formerly incarcerated students. Find a sense of purpose and overcome barriers to employment, housing, and education.

Interested in joining? Send the following to our contact information at the top of this page:

- Full name & DIN number •
- Current college you are enrolled in and/or where you will study post-release •
- Contact information for college/university where you will study •

May 2023 Newsletter

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Sin in the World, Sin in Me

*L. Lapean, Jesuit Scholastic at Ciszek Hall,
Fordham University*

We all sin, no matter who we are or what our job is. What makes humans special is our ability to choose to try to do better the next time. The fact that every human sins does not excuse our sins, but it does allow us to show kindness and mercy to ourselves and to others as we reflect on the role that sin has played in our lives and in the life of the world.

The Evil Spirit always tries to get us to give up and accept sin as normal. It is at those times that our prayer is so important because by praying we can talk to Jesus about our struggles and listen to His response. Whenever I have spoken with Jesus about my own struggles, I have been shown more love and mercy than I know what to do with –and you are being invited to have similar conversations and experience the same love and mercy!

As we pray this month, perhaps, we are being invited to see our own sinful histories through eyes of mercy and love, as God does. We do not try to ignore or minimize what we have done, but we recognize that outside forces urge us to make decisions that we might not make otherwise. When we are able to accept that we have sinned and bring those sins before God, we are able to better know ourselves and discern what God is inviting us to do moving forward.

The Law of the Flesh and the Law of the Spirit

Romans 7:14-25

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

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 want to do good but end up choosing the bad?
- 4 Are there dynamics, thoughts, or feelings in me that I feel come from the evil spirit?
- 5 What gives me the strength to do the good in my life?

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 True Meaning of God’s Law

Matthew 15:1-14

Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, “Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat.” He answered them, “And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? For God commanded, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ But you say, ‘If anyone tells his father or his mother, “What you would have gained from me is given to God,” he need not honor his father.’ So, for the sake of your tradition, you have made void the word of God. You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said:

“This people honors me with their lips,
but their heart is far from me;
in vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”

And he called the people to him and said to them, “Hear and understand: it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person.” Then the disciples came and said to him, “Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?” He answered, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.”

Questions for Reflection

- 1 Are there situations in my life where I don’t practice what I preach? If so, what are they?
- 2 Are there words that leave my mouth that promote conflict and are hurtful?
- 3 Is my relationship with God a matter of the heart?
- 4 Can I talk to God as I would to a good friend?

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.

Thy Will Be Done, on Earth as It Is in Heaven

V. Guido, Thrive For Life Spiritual Mentor

The phrase “Thy will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven” is a powerful statement of surrendering to the divine will and accepting what is beyond our control. When reciting this prayer in the context of incarceration, it takes on even greater significance. Incarceration can be a deeply isolating and dehumanizing experience, leaving individuals feeling powerless and disconnected from the world around them.

For some, the phrase can be an invitation to trust that there is a plan for their life. It can be a source of comfort to know that they are not alone and that our Heavenly Father is in control. For others, the phrase can be a call to action. As we are all called to do God’s work on Earth, for those who are incarcerated, this may mean finding ways to contribute positively to their communities even while behind bars. This could be through volunteering, mentoring other inmates, or participating in educational programs.

In a broader sense, the phrase “Thy will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven” can also be a reminder of the importance of justice and compassion in our society. For those who work in the criminal justice system, it can be a call to ensure that justice is done fairly and that the punishment fits the crime, while also recognizing the humanity of those who are incarcerated and working to create a system that supports rehabilitation and healing. Incarceration can be a time of deep spiritual reflection and growth, and the Lord’s Prayer can be a powerful tool for navigating the complexities of this experience. Its emphasis on surrender, trust, and acceptance offers a roadmap for finding meaning and purpose in even the most difficult circumstances.