

## **April 15, St. Damien de Veuster, SS.CC.**

Gerelyn Hollingsworth | Apr. 15, 2010

"He respected the religious convictions of others; he accepted them as people and received with joy their collaboration and their help. With a heart wide open to the most abject and wretched, he showed no difference in his approach and in his care of the lepers. In his parish ministry or in his works of charity he found a place for everyone.

"Among his best friends were Meyer, a Lutheran, the superintendent of the leper colony, Clifford, an Anglican, and Moritz, a painter, a free-thinker who was the doctor on Molokai and Dr Masanao Goto, a Japanese Buddhist and leprologist."

--[Vatican Biography](#) [1]

Today is the feast of [St. Damien de Veuster](#). [2]Martyr of Charity, Apostle to the Lepers, Servant of Humanity.

Jozef de Veuster was born in Belgium in 1840. In 1859 he entered the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary (Picpus Fathers) at Louvain, taking the name Damien. His brother, who was a member of the order, volunteered for the mission in Hawaii, but was stricken with typhus before departure. Brother Damien took his place and sailed for the islands in 1863. In May, 1864, he was ordained in Honolulu.

In 1873, Fr. Damien volunteered for Molokai, the "living cemetery" where lepers were confined. For sixteen years he ministered to the lepers, building houses and orphanages, organizing farms, raising funds. He contracted leprosy and died on April 15, 1889, aged 49.

Damien de Veuster was canonized by Pope Benedict XVI in October, 2009.

Please click [here](#) [3] to see the bronze statue of Fr. Damien by Marisol Escobar, given by the State of Hawaii to the National Statuary Hall Collection in the United States Capitol.

"The bronze statue is based on photographs taken of Father Damien near the end of his life, with the scars of his disease visible on his face and his right arm in a sling beneath his cloak. His broad-brimmed hat was traditionally worn by missionaries. His right hand holds a cane."

Click [here](#) [4] to read "Father Damien: An Open Letter to the Reverend Doctor Hyde of Honolulu," from Robert Louis Stevenson, published by Chatto and Windus, London, 1890. In this letter, Stevenson refutes the charges made against Fr. Damien by a Presbyterian clergyman and predicts the future canonization of the Catholic missionary.

Click [here](#) [5] for *Damien the Leper*, by John Farrow, Sheed & Ward, 1937. This 1998 edition has a foreword by Mia Farrow. Search terms: expectoration, folk-lore, death.

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[1] [http://www.vatican.va/news\\_services/liturgy/saints/2009/ns\\_lit\\_doc\\_20091011\\_de-veuster\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/saints/2009/ns_lit_doc_20091011_de-veuster_en.html)

[2] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Father\\_Damien](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Father_Damien)

[3] <http://www.aoc.gov/cc/art/nsh/damien.cfm>

[4] <http://books.google.com/books?id=fp-ozvFYXZYC&printsec=frontcover&ie=ISO-8859-1&output=html>

[5]

[http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0385489110/ref=s9\\_simh\\_gw\\_p14\\_i1?pf\\_rd\\_m=ATVPDKIKX0DER&pf\\_rd\\_3&pf\\_rd\\_r=1SYYX4E34EWJN3ZTWF75&pf\\_rd\\_t=101&pf\\_rd\\_p=470938811&pf\\_rd\\_i=507846](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0385489110/ref=s9_simh_gw_p14_i1?pf_rd_m=ATVPDKIKX0DER&pf_rd_3&pf_rd_r=1SYYX4E34EWJN3ZTWF75&pf_rd_t=101&pf_rd_p=470938811&pf_rd_i=507846)