



PAOTO A. LAMMINEUR

# D I M A S

**H**is name was Dimas. The name is not a strange one and it has been known since the earliest years of the Church. According to tradition, the Good Thief who stole Paradise on Good Friday was called Dimas.

But this Dimas was a merchant who run a very successful dry-goods store. He spoke various dialects, knew many people, and for all he always had a cheerful greeting and a good-natured joke. He was the most popular merchant in town. After closing his store at night, Dimas, like any other good businessman, counted his gain. He was a clever merchant, but a tricky one too. He knew it, and his 15-year old son, Dives, knew it also. Often the boy would tell his father,

"Dad, I am afraid God is not pleased with the petty tricks you practice on your customers, and which you wish me to imitate."

"Bah, sonny," Dimas would ex-postulate, "that is done everywhere and by everybody. Else how shall we gain? Moreover, we take only a little from every unsuspecting customer, though for us it adds up to a handsome profit at the end of a busy day." And Dimas would sing as he counted the silver pesos and pesetas and the copper coins. He would sing of money, of how sweet it was to possess it and how it made his heart happy. He would sing of retiring soon from business and of helping the poor with his gain. In these high spirits Dimas would go to bed.

On one such night Dimas had a dream—a terrible one. In his dream he saw his patron, St. Dimas beckoning him to follow. They passed a deep forest till they came to a deep hole into which the two entered. The hole widened as it went deeper, down the earth, supported by pillars of fire.

Dimas saw many people moving around—curious-looking people, horned, cleft-footed and tailed. These assembled, and, following one who held a banner, paraded towards Dimas shouting: "Long live Dimas the merchant!"

The latter would have died of fear had the Saint not stood by him, urging him to look well at the banner. Dimas did so, and he saw a strange design—as it were, a mosaic made of cuttings of cloth, little quantities of sugar, rice, flour, dried fish, onions, and other things. There were even his own prices he had listed at 5, 10, 25 centavos more than what they should have been. Meanwhile the devils kept repeating their weird refrain: "Long live Dimas, Dimas the thief!"

Dimas woke up, shivering with fright. He thanked God that it was only a dream, but he got no more sleep that night.

The next day a new customer came to the store for five meters of the best rayon. The Best, he said, for it was to make a wedding suit. Something clicked in Dimas' mind. His eyes shone like electric bulbs. He could easily have a ₱10 gain. But that dream—that strange banner! . . . But this was business. Customers know merchants must profit, he argued within himself. Yes, he would. But again, no, he would not. Dimas felt hot as fire. He must steal a little or he would go broke—all merchants. But that procession . . . , those burning pillars of fire, that frightful chorus of the devils, kept coming to his mind . . . Why did not this customer come yesterday, before his dream? He looked at his meter-stick—a false one. Hot perspiration trickled down his temples. What could he do?

Just then, as in his dream, S. Dimas stood again beside him, looking deep into the grocer's eyes. He seemed to speak. "Friend," he said, "have you forgotten last night? Or do you not yet understand? Do as you would under God's very eyes. Hurry up! Measure well and ask a just price." With St. Dimas looking sharply on, the merchant could not do otherwise but dispatch his customer honestly. He became speechless with the pain of loss. Suddenly he became aware that his patron Saint was talking to him again.

"Good-bye," he was saying, "I must go now with St. Yves, patron of lawyers, to scold some crooked lawyers who make wrong cases right, just for a few hundred pesos. Then I shall accompany St. Luke to some charge exorbitant fees from poor patients. St. Mark also invited me to visit some Notaries Public whose affidavits are pure lies and inventions. Next I shall go with St. Crispin to some naughty shoemakers who keep fooling—always fooling—their customers, and thence St. Eligius and I will call the attention of several mechanics who say they repair and fix many things in cars just to increase their fees. There are so many crooks. Be wise, Dimas, and don't add your name to the list. God know all things; and do not hope for heaven until you have made restitution for all your unjust profits."

Dimas begged the saint not to go yet. How was he to make restitution for all his little thefts? The Saint suggested works of charity and penance—now or at the hour of his death.

"Ah, no," Dimas exclaimed. "It might be too hot and dangerous to wait that long." He was ready to do



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all your clever tricks try to pass through the hole. You can be so elastic, Dimas."

The grocer fell to his knees and begged for mercy, but the St. refused saying, "You have not even said you're sorry!"

Dimas' sweat ran down his face. He grew so cold and pale that his patron, remembering how he too was once a crook, took pity on him and said:

"All right. If you are truly sorry, go at once to Confession. Then make restitution to whomever you may still be able to; and don't ever start cheating again."

Lowering his voice almost to a whisper, the Saint added: "If you do, Dimas, . . . . .", and he left without finishing his threat.

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whatever the Saint prescribed for his punishment.

"Do it now," he hurried.

"Not I" said St. Dimas. "It is you who must do it. Take a piece of silk, and with the point of your shears make a tiny hole on it. Then with

Dives found his father staring blankly into yards of white rayon.

"Dives," he said, looking up, "do not ever cheat our customers."

### FIRST FOR THE BEST

St. Louis, King of France, once saw his sister Isabella busily engaged in making a beautiful piece of embroidery.

"May I expect to receive this as a gift?" he said to her, smiling.

"No," said Isabella. "It is the first of its kind, and I am making it for my Saviour, Jesus Christ."

And when the embroidery was finished, she presented it to the first poor person she met.