

Footsteps of American Saints - Blessed Damien of Molokai



About this activity

The goal of this activity is to share the lives of several saints so that the youth might relate to what these people have done and maybe look to these individuals as role models.

For more information about this Saint, check out the websites below.

www.Catholic.org
www.AmericanCatholic.org
www.newadvent.org
www.ewtn.com/saintsHoly

How to start

Read about this saint. You can find the answers to these questions on www.newadvent.org and www.AmericanCatholic.org. Feel free to use other resources.

Complete 4 requirements and 2 of the activities.

Requirements

- 1) He took the name of a 4th century physician and blessed when he became a priest...Fr. Damien. What was his original name and why do we call him Blessed Damien of Molokai?
- 2) Before going to Hawaii, Blessed Damien of Molokai worked as a missionary. What were the circumstances that allowed him to travel to Hawaii?
- 3) When did he become a priest?
- 4) Blessed Damien of Molokai was given a memorial feast day by Pope John Paul II in 1995. When is that day celebrated?
- 5) What is Blessed Damien of Molokai most known for devoting his life to?
- 6) King David Kalakaua bestowed what honor on Damien?

Activities

- 1) Discuss with your family or counselor, some of the values that you admire most about Blessed Damien of Molokai . What is he known for? How can you be more like him?
- 2) Draw a picture showing some of his accomplishments. Share this picture with your family.
- 3) Create a poster of hope and deliver it to a children hospital in your community.
- 4) Visit with the sick or elderly. Spend time learning what they like. Possibly bring a kitten or puppy from the pound to visit with the elderly for a couple of hours.

Blessed Damien, Martyr of Molokai



Feast Day May 10

Joseph de Veuster was born in Belgium on January 3, 1840. While at college, he decided God was calling him to be a priest. He joined the same community his brother had joined and took the name Damien. Damien's brother had dreamed of being a missionary overseas. But he became ill and was unable to go to the Hawaiian Islands as assigned. Damien offered to go in his place. He traveled to Hawaii and two months later, on May 24, 1864, was ordained a priest in Honolulu.

For nine years, Damien served the people in different villages around Hawaii. While working, he heard about a settlement of lepers on the island of Molokai. He was told that life on the island was terrible for the lepers. They were very poor, and there was not one doctor or priest on the island. Father Damien thought he was needed there. He went to Molokai to work with the lepers.

Those who could walk came to meet Father Damien's boat. They wanted to see this priest who had come to work with them. They were sure he wouldn't stay long when he saw what life there was like. Lepers often have unpleasant sores, and some even lose fingers and toes. Because there were no laws or police on the island, many who were not very ill lived wild lives.

Father Damien got busy right away. He cleaned up huts, nursed those who were very sick, and tried new medicines. Those able to help were put to work building better houses. Father Damien preached and offered Mass, but he also built roads, water systems, orphanages, and churches. He even started a choir and a band. He made the lepers feel that they were people with dignity. They learned to better respect themselves and one another.

Father Damien always began his homily with "My dear lepers." One Sunday in 1885, he stood before his congregation and began his homily by saying "My fellow lepers." At first, it was very quiet. Then people began to sob. Their beloved Father Damien had gotten the disease. Even though he was ill, Father Damien carried on his work. Eventually, a group of Franciscan sisters from New York, under the leadership of Mother Marianne, came to help. Father Damien died when he was 49 years old.

As requested, he was buried in Hawaii, but in 1936, the Belgian government succeeded in having his body moved to Belgium. Pope John Paul II declared him beatified on June 4, 1995. Part of Damien's body was then returned to his beloved Hawaiian brothers and sisters.

Damien was canonized by Pope Benedict XVI on October 11, 2009. During the ceremony, Pope Benedict said, "Father Damien made the choice to go on the island of Molokai in the service of lepers who were there, abandoned by all. So he exposed himself to the disease of which they suffered. With them he felt at home. The servant of the Word became a suffering servant, leper with the lepers, during the last four years of his life."

Although Saint Damien's feast day is May 10, Hawaii celebrates his feast day statewide on April 15, the day of his death.

Saint Damien is considered to be the spiritual patron of leprosy, HIV and AIDS patients as well as outcasts.