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Saint Damien of Molokai

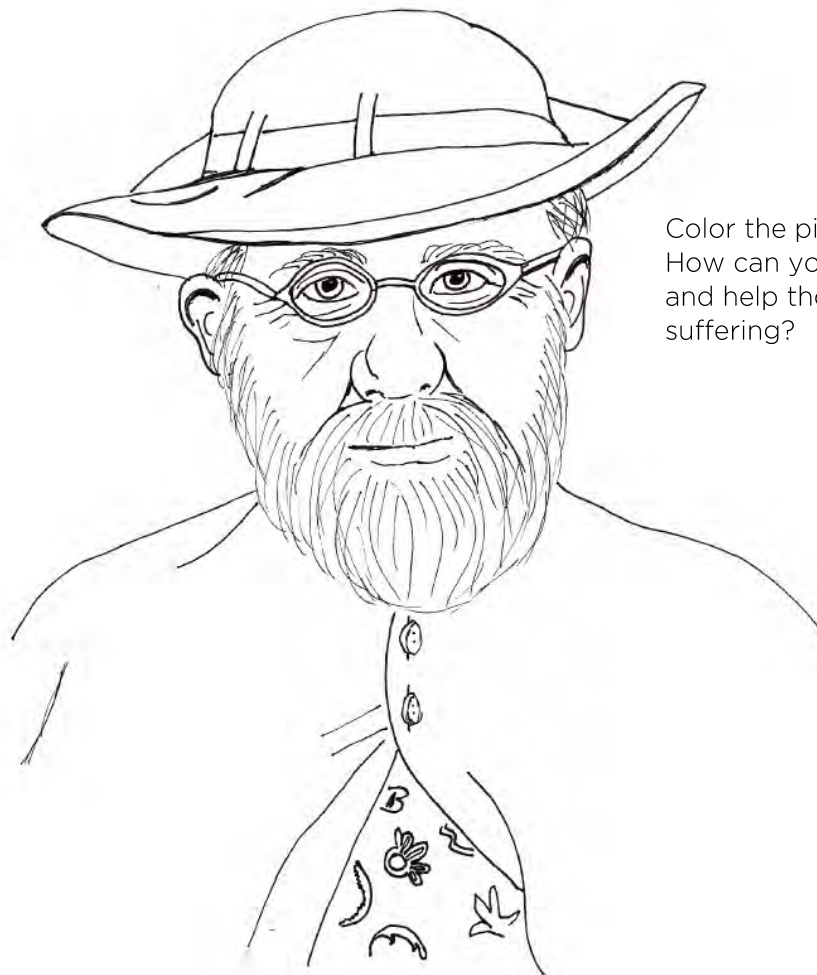
Feast Day: May 10 (1840-1889)



los angeles missionary
childhood
association

Lower Grades

Saint Damien joined the ranks of saints when Pope Benedict XVI canonized him in 2009. Born in Belgium in 1840, he was known as Joseph de Veuster. At the age of twenty he entered the religious Fathers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary and he prayed daily to be sent on a mission. Four years later his prayers were answered. Joseph was sent to Honolulu. There he was ordained a priest and took the name Damien. For nine years Fr. Damien worked in Honolulu, then he volunteered to go to the island of Molokai where people suffering from leprosy were shipped and quarantined for life. Back then, people died of the disease (which is now treatable and referred to as Hansen's disease), and most people were afraid to help them. Fr. Damien was the first missionary to volunteer to go. For sixteen years he cared for their spiritual, physical, and emotions needs. He built clinics, orphanages, and churches. He established a cemetery, built coffins, and buried the dead. Fr. Damien eventually contracted the disease and died on the island in 1889. On this, his feast day, we pray for missionaries like Saint Damien, who spend their lives caring for the sick and the poor.



Color the picture of Fr. Damien.
How can you be more like him
and help those who are
suffering?

<https://www.scribd.com/doc/14237246/St-Damien>

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Upper Grades



The Gospels record that Jesus reached out to lepers with kindness and healing. Centuries later Father Damien heard the same cry and responded with mercy. He devoted his life to bringing the touch of Jesus to the outcast of society.

Joseph de Veuster was born in Belgium, the son of well-to-do farmers. While at college, he decided God was calling him to be a priest. He joined the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, the same community his older brother had joined, and he took the name Damien. When illness prevented his brother from sailing to the missions in Hawaii, Damien offered to go to this place. He arrived in Hawaii and was ordained in Honolulu.

For nine years Damien served the people of Hawaii in different villages. But he was most interested in a settlement for people with leprosy (Hansen's disease) on the Hawaiian island of Molokai. The colony was very poor, and there was not a single doctor or priest on the island. Father Damien offered to go to Molokai and work with the lepers.

In 1873 all the lepers who could walk came to meet the boat to see the priest who wanted to work with them. They were sure he wouldn't stay very long. Lepers often have unpleasant sores, and some lose parts of their bodies. Those lepers who were not very ill sometimes lived a wild life

because there were no laws and no police on the island.

Father Damien got busy cleaning up huts, caring for the very sick, and trying new medicines. Those able to help were put to work building houses. Father Damien not only preached and offered Mass, but also build roads, water systems, orphanages, and churches and acted as sheriff, counselor, and undertaker. He even organized a choir and a band! He made the people feel they were important, so they began to take better care of themselves and their property. Through his efforts many people turned away from their immoral habits.

For 10 years Father Damien was the only priest on the island. He had permission to stay there permanently. Damien begged for money from the outside world to help his 800 lepers. Some people helped, but others attacked his reputation.

At mass on Sunday's Father Damien always began his homily with "My dear lepers." One day he said, "My fellow lepers." At first it was very quiet. Then people began to sob. They knew that their beloved Father Damien had contracted the disease. He carried on his work until a month before his death. Joseph Dutton, a layman from Vermont who was called Brother Joseph, joined Father Damien and stayed for 44 years. Franciscan Sisters from New York under the leadership of Mother Marianne Cope also came to help.

Father Damien worked with the lepers for 16 years before he died. He is sometimes called the Martyr of Molokai.