

THE STORY OF SAINT DAMIEN

(REMEMBERED MAY 10, DIED IN 1889)

FOCUS: SAINT DAMIEN KNEW THAT ALL PEOPLE ARE ONE BIG FAMILY.

THE MATERIAL

- ❖ Location: The mystery of Pentecost shelf, second shelf
- ❖ Pieces: Saint Damien booklet, saint stand, wooden saw, colorful flower and bee, Pandanus tree, marbles in a bag
- ❖ Underlay: white

BACKGROUND

We remember St. Damien on the day that he arrived at Molokai, May 10, 1873. He was born in Belgium, in a village called 'Tremelo', as Jozef De Veuster. He became a priest and joined the Priests of the Sacred Hearts, a Christian missionary order founded in 1800. He went to Hawaii as a missionary priest, fulfilling his brother's dream who could not go due to medical reasons. There he was confronted with the discrimination of patients suffering from leprosy. He went with them to Molokai, an island where the people diagnosed with leprosy were sent to. He helped organizing the local community at Molokai: he built houses, cared for the people, played with the children, buried the dead ... Finally he was affected by the disease himself and died of leprosy in 1889.

St. Damien is well known as the missionary priest suffering from leprosy. We choose not to focus on the disease, but on other important aspects of his life that are often underestimated or even forgotten. Damien and the people at Molokai were and wanted to be more than their illness alone. Therefore, we speak about 'people suffering from leprosy' rather than 'lepers'. Language is important, especially in children's stories. The name 'leprosy' is also known as 'Hansen's disease'.

NOTES ON THE MATERIAL

St. Damien's story sits on a small, shallow tray about 8 inches square, with sides about 2 inches deep. It has a groove in the front to slide the "saint booklet" in so the children can see it when they approach the Mystery of Pentecost shelf.

The booklet is 4.25" x 5.5". The cover has an image of St. Damien on it that matches the wooden saint figure used in the stories on the communion of saints. The second page has a map of the world on it, with Belgium, Damien's home, and Molokai, Damien's second home, highlighted and named. It also has an image of the flag of Hawaii. The third page has a time line beginning with the year 1 AD and ending with the year 2000 AD. It has an arrow indicating when Damien lived. The rest of the booklet contains the story of the life of St. Damien.

Behind the booklet in the tray are placed the objects used to help us remember Damien's life: a wooden saw, a colorful wooden flower and a wooden bee (all two-dimensional), a three-dimensional wooden Pandanus tree, and some marbles in a bag. The underlay is a 12" square piece of white felt and is folded on top of the objects.

MOVEMENTS	WORDS
<i>Go and get the material for Damien's story.</i>	Watch where I go to get the story for today.
<i>Unfold the white underlay in front of you.</i>	This is the story of Saint Damien. The church remembers Damien in the time of the color white. I wonder <i>why</i> we remember Damien? Let's see.
<i>Take the saint booklet from the tray and place it in the center of the underlay with Damien's image facing up and toward the children. If the children can't read yet, you might choose to place the wooden figure of Damien instead.</i>	
<p><i>Make a gesture of blessing with your hand.</i></p> <p><i>Place the saw on the underlay.</i></p>	<p>Almost 200 years ago, Damien was born in Belgium. His name was not yet Damien by then. His parents named him "Joseph". He grew up in a big family: he had 3 brothers and 4 sisters, and God was close to them.</p> <p>His parents were farmers. On a farm, there is always work to do. The children helped along. Little Joseph took care of the animals and worked in the fields. A carpenter nearby showed him how to work with wood.</p>
	<p>When he was 18 years old, he decided to leave the family home and went to the monastery, just as his older brother Pamfiel did. At the monastery, he found a new home. He liked his new home, and was filled with joy and laughter. His name was changed into Damien.</p> <p>His brother Pamfiel was ready to leave Belgium and to travel to Hawaii, as a missionary priest. But shortly before the departure, he became ill. Damien took his place. He was 23 years old. It would be his work to tell about Jesus and to care for the people. He said goodbye to his family and took the boat to the other side of the world. The journey would last for 140 days.</p>
<i>Place the flower on the underlay.</i>	<p>At Hawaii, everything was different: the language, the habits, the religion, the weather, the animals, even the flowers.... It did not scare Damien. He knew that God was close to him.</p> <p>At first, he learned the new language and he became a priest. Then, he began his work, excited and full of energy. But ... what was his work?</p> <p>He visited people, especially the sick people.</p> <p>He told stories about Jesus. He built wooden churches and little chapels.</p>

<p><i>Place the bee on the flower.</i></p>	<p>He cultivated vegetables. He kept sheep and bees. He was as diligent as a bee. At Hawaii, he had found a new home and a new family. He cared for them. From time to time, he wrote a letter to his family in Belgium.</p>
<p><i>Place the tree on the underlay.</i></p>	<p>While Damien was in Hawaii, the illness called “leprosy” was spreading quickly. Leprosy is a contagious illness and at that time there was no medicine yet. When you became ill, you were sent to the island Molokai. Sick children were sent away as well. On the island, all the inhabitants were sick. Damien wanted to be close to them, so he took the boat to Molokai. Before he began his work, he rested under a special tree, a Pandanus tree. He prayed, and he came close to God and God came close to him.</p>
<p><i>Point to the saw.</i></p> <p><i>Point to the bee.</i></p> <p><i>Make a blessing gesture.</i></p>	<p>The work at Molokai was hard: there were few houses, there were no doctors, and many people died from leprosy. But Damien remained joyful and full of energy. He built wooden houses for the people. He built a little church where he celebrated mass every week. He visited the sick and he played with the children. And from time to time, he wrote a letter to his family in Belgium. Then he asked how everyone was doing. He asked for money or for building materials. He never stopped asking for help.</p> <p>He still was as diligent as a bee. He found a new home, and a new family. And God was close to them.</p>
<p><i>Pour out the marbles on the underlay.</i></p> <p><i>Point to the tree.</i></p>	<p>Damien came close to the people suffering from leprosy, so close that he became sick himself. After a while, he could not get out of his bed anymore. He knew that he was going to die, but stayed joyful and full of energy. He was still concerned about his new family, especially about the children. He wrote letters to ask for marbles for the children, so they could play. He died with a smile on his face. He knew that he was going home, God’s home. He was buried under a special tree, the Pandanus tree.</p>
	<p>We remember Damien, because he knew that all people are one big family.</p>

<p><i>Sit back for a moment and reflect silently on all that is laid out before you. Prepare yourself for the wondering about Damien's life. When you and the children are ready, begin by asking these questions.</i></p>	<p>I wonder what part of Damien's story you like best?</p> <p>I wonder what part of the story is the most important?</p> <p>I wonder what part of the story is about you or where you might be in this story?</p> <p>I wonder if we could leave out any part of the story and still have all the story we need?</p>
<p><i>Show the booklet. Point out the map of the world, the flag and the time line.</i></p>	<p>Let me show you what is inside this booklet and how you can use it to find out more about Damien.</p>
<p><i>Model how to put the story back in the tray and then carry it back to its spot on the shelf.</i></p>	<p>Now let me show you how to put the story away. Here is the saw like the one Damien used to build houses. Here is the colorful flower like the flowers in Hawaii. And here is the bee, Damien was as diligent as a bee. Here is the Pandanus tree at Molokai, where Damien rested, prayed, and was buried. Here is the booklet that helps us remember Damien. And here is the white underlay, because we remember Damien during the season of Easter, a time of the color white.</p>
<p><i>Help the children find their work.</i></p>	<p>Now I wonder what work you would like to get out today?</p>