MISSION AWARENESS LESSON PLAN (Religion Curriculum)
BLESSED DAMIEN OF MOLOKAI: A MODERN MISSIONARY

Goal: Provide students with an awareness of a missionary saint as a positive role model (Religion Guideline #4).
Rationale: Catholics come to know God through the lives, faith and actions of others "who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith" as well as of those who live in the world today.
Materials needed: this lesson plan, accompanying story, map of the world, picture of Fr. Damien, and any necessary materials for optional follow-up activity.
Objectives: (Subject areas in the curriculum where the objectives could be addressed are indicated in parentheses.)

1. To assist children in developing the understanding that God's people are called to reach out to one another and help them as Jesus did-that is, to be missionaries (religion)
2. To help children respond appropriately to the question; What is a missionary?
   One who:loves and respects everyone in God's family
   teaches others about Jesus
   lives like Jesus
   Thus, we are all missionaries (religion)
3. To introduce a special missionary: Blessed Damien of Molokai (see attached brief biography) — telling as much of the story that you feel will interest/be appropriate for the children at your grade level (religion)
4. To present, in the context of the story, some simple geographical concepts (social studies). A) Do this by presenting the difficulties of travel in those times by tracing on a map or globe the route of Damien's ship to Hawaii-through the North Sea and English Channel, south into the North Atlantic Ocean, across the equator, through the Strait of Magellan (Cape Horn area), across the equator again passing Panama, Costa Rica and Guatemala and on to the Hawaiian Islands. B) Learn the names of the different Hawaiian Islands (once called the Sandwich Islands): Kauai, Oahu, Molokai, Lanai, Kahoolawe, Maui, and Hawaii
5. To help the children develop listening skills (language arts)
6. To present a few facts about the disease called Hansen's Disease/leprosy: the disease is as old as the human race and was considered contagious and incurable. Lepers were treated as outcasts until late in the nineteenth century; in 1873 Dr. Hansen discovered the bacillus of leprosy and in 1881 Dr. Nisser isolated it for study (social studies). There are still millions of lepers in the world, but they are no longer isolated; they receive help through the United Nations. Modem surgery and drugs such as dapsone can arrest the disease and help lepers to be rehabilitated back into society.
7. To expand the children's vocabulary by introducing vocabulary and concepts as appropriate: missionary, ordained priest, Hansen's Disease (leprosy), commitment, beatification.

Procedure:

1 . Prepare the children to listen to a story. Have picture of Fr. Damien and either a map or globe.
2. Tell the story of Fr. Damien (elaborate/abbreviate as appropriate).
3. Use the follow-up questions (below)
4. Prayer: "Oh, my dear brothers and sisters, let us all live as good Christians, with the hope of meeting one day in heaven"' (Fr. Damien).
5. Present some follow up activity. Those listed below are optional. Follow-up questions:

Follow-up questions:

1. Think back to what you know of Joseph when he was little. What was one of his favorite times? (listening to stories, especially of missionary saints) Do you think this had anything to do with his becoming a missionary?
2. When Joseph went away to be a priest, what new name was he given? Why do you think he received a new name (he was beginning a new part of his life). When are we given names/new names? (sacraments: baptism, confirmation)
3. What are some of the things that Fr. Damien did for the people of Molokai? (refer to story) Possible follow-up activities:

Possible follow-up activities:

1. Illustrate your favorite part of the story of Father Damien.
2. Illustrate, in sequence, 3 parts of the Father Damien story.
3. Trace Father Damien's journey from Belgium to Hawaii on the map.
4. Do some research on Hansen's Disease-its consequences and treatment today. Can you compare it to the AIDS disease?
5. Write a letter to a missionary priest or sister of lay missioner. Thank him or her for what she is doing.

FATHER DAMIEN OF MOLOKAI

One winter day in the year 1840 (more than 150 years ago) a boy was born in the country of Belgium *(show on map)* in a farming town called Tremeloo. His name was Joseph DeVeuster. Joseph had seven brothers and sisters. There were very few books in their farmhouse and Joseph's first lessons were from his mother. Everyday in the late afternoon Joseph and his brothers and sisters would go with their mother into the kitchen. This was a favorite time; Joseph loved to listen to stories of the saints that his mother read, especially the ones about **missionary** saints.

When Joseph was ten, he received his first communion. He went to school until he was 13 and then he worked full time helping his father on the farm. He loved God very much and wanted to go away and study to be a priest just as his older brother had done. He fulfilled this desire when he was 19; he went to the Sacred Hearts Fathers. He received the new name of Damien. Damien wanted to be a missionary-to serve God's people in far away lands. At that time, men were usually not sent as missionaries until they were **ordained** priests, but Damien was an exception. This is what happened. His brother, who was already a priest, was supposed to go as a missionary to the Hawaiian Islands. But since his brother was sick, Damien was allowed to have his wish and take his brother's place as a missionary. This was in 1863. He was to travel by ship; there was no other way to get to the Hawaiian Islands at that time. And because Hawaii was so far away and travel was so difficult in those days, he knew he would never return to his family in Belgium. The journey on the ship lasted 146 days-4 1/2 months *(show on map)*. It was a very rough crossing in terrible weather but Damien and his companions finally arrived on March 19, 1864. Two months later Damien was ordained a priest in Hawaii (1864). He spent the next 8 years serving the people in different parts of the Hawaiian Islands. Life was not always easy for him; he had difficulties learning to understand the ways of the Hawaiian people.

In 1873 the head of Damien's order asked for a volunteer to go to Molokai, which was an island of hate and fear. Damien immediately volunteered and he was sent. The reason Molokai was considered to be such a terrible place was because it had been chosen by the king of Hawaii as the place to send people who had a disease called leprosy (**leprosy** is now called **Hansen's Disease**). This disease was considered very contagious and incurable, so people who had it were separated and sent away from their friends and family. There were 800 lepers on Molokai at that time.

When Damien arrived there was no place for him to live so he slept under a pandanus tree, which is an exotic plant in which rodents and other creatures rested. His first task was to fix up a church for the people; then he built himself a very small house. Damien was not afraid of the people with leprosy-he accepted food from their hands, drank from their cups and even shared his pipe with them. Nevertheless, the people did not accept him right away. But he never stopped working for them. He worked to get pipes so they could have water; he got lumber and built homes and hospitals. Food was scarce and he worked until he got food and milk for the people as well as clothing, bandages, and medicine. He built a hospital and got cots for it. He washed and bandaged the sores and wounds of each patient. He developed a cemetery and built more than 600 coffins by hand. Damien believed that **"one person can make a difference"; he proved this by his actions.**

After working with the lepers on Molokai for twelve years, Father Damien himself announced that he, too, had the disease. He began a talk by saying: "We lepers." Then his people knew that he was truly one of them.

People today are quick to admire a generous spirit but find it difficult to make a life-long **commitment**. But Damien shows us that love in the Gospel sense means a commitment and getting involved.

Father Damien died in 1889 -almost a hundred years ago--at the age of 49. In 1994 Damien was beatified by Pope John Paul VI. Damien's **feast** is May 10.

Words printed in **bold type** are words that may need special explanation, depending on grade level.