
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO SAINT DAMIEN DAY.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that Saint Damien was
2 born Jozef De Veuster in Tremelo, Belgium in 1840. He arrived
3 as a Roman Catholic missionary in Honolulu, Hawaii in March,
4 1864. On May 21, 1864, Damien was ordained to the priesthood at
5 the Cathedral of Our Lady of Peace in Honolulu. In 1873, Father
6 Damien arrived to live among the more than eight hundred
7 individuals who had contracted leprosy, now known as Hansen's
8 disease, and were forced to live in medical quarantine at the
9 secluded Kalaupapa settlement on Molokai. Aware of his exposure
10 to leprosy, or Hansen's disease, at Kalaupapa, Father Damien
11 spent many years caring for the spiritual, physical, and
12 emotional needs of the stigmatized Kalaupapa residents, becoming
13 a source of consolation and encouragement. Father Damien
14 ultimately contracted and died of Hansen's disease in Kalaupapa,
15 Molokai, on April 15, 1889, at age forty-nine.

16 In recognition of his works, Damien was beatified in 1995
17 by Pope John Paul II and received the official title of Blessed



1 Damien of Molokai. Upon his beatification, Blessed Damien was
2 granted a feast day, which is celebrated on May 10.

3 On the eve of Father Damien's canonization, President
4 Barack Obama issued a statement in which he expressed his deep
5 admiration for the life of Blessed Damien de Veuster and noted
6 that Father Damien ultimately sacrificed his own life to give
7 dignity to Hansen's disease patients. On October 11, 2009, one
8 hundred twenty years after Father Damien's death, Pope Benedict
9 XVI elevated Father Damien of Molokai to sainthood in Saint
10 Peter's Basilica in Rome.

11 More than five hundred fifty individuals from Hawaii,
12 including eleven of the remaining residents of Kalaupapa, made
13 the twelve thousand mile trip to Rome for the canonization of
14 Father Damien. As part of their pilgrimage, the Hawaii
15 contingent also visited Father Damien's hometown and his tomb in
16 Belgium, expressing their gratitude for the opportunity to
17 participate in the historic event. A large number of Belgium
18 residents, including Belgium's king and queen, also attended the
19 ceremony in Rome to celebrate Father Damien's canonization.

20 The purpose of this Act is to establish Saint Damien Day,
21 in recognition of the service of Father Damien to the people of



1 Hawaii and of his personal sacrifice to provide care for the
2 sick.

3 SECTION 2. Chapter 8, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended
4 by adding a new section to be appropriately designated and to
5 read as follows:

6 "§8- Saint Damien Day. May 10 shall be known and
7 designated as Saint Damien Day. This day shall not be construed
8 to be a state holiday."

9 SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.

10 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

11

INTRODUCED BY:

John M. Burns
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Annular

JAN 25 2010



Report Title:

Saint Damien Day

Description:

Establishes May 10 as Saint Damien Day, which is not to be construed as a state holiday.

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