



## **A Quest for Justice**

### **A Resolution on the Occasion of the Canonization of Father Damien**

#### **By and For Individuals Affected by Leprosy Throughout the World**

The canonization of Father Damien De Veuster provides an unprecedented opportunity to focus the world's attention on the modern day realities of leprosy. At the same time, discussing his work with the people of Kalaupapa enables us to promote issues related to justice and human rights that were the cornerstone of his work. As we honor his memory, it is equally important that we honor his commitment to promoting the equal and inalienable rights of every human being.

Today, 120 years after the death of Father Damien, people around the world affected by leprosy continued to be denied the basic rights outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including: The right to home, the right to family, the right to work, the right to education, the right to nationality, the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being, and the right to be free from degrading treatment.

Father Damien insisted on justice. He insisted that people should not be deprived of their rights or value as human beings because they had a disease. He saw the value, dignity and inspiration in each person.

Discussing Father Damien's life and work in the context of the human rights issues facing people affected by leprosy today provides an important bridge between the past and present. The Church has always played an important role in supporting people who have had leprosy. The canonization of Father Damien provides the Church with the opportunity to circulate a timely message throughout the world about the basic human rights of individuals affected by this disease.

As we honor the work that Father Damien did more than a century ago, it is essential to make it clear that today:

- 1) Leprosy is curable. The biggest problems facing people affected by leprosy are related to outdated images and prejudice and discrimination that result in widespread human rights violations.
- 2) The term "leper" is not appropriate in modern times. We must ensure that in talking about Father Damien we use the language of today, not of 100

years ago. We must urge the public to recognize that although the word “leper” was a historical term widely used in Father Damien’s day, it has taken on increasingly negative connotations in the last century. We must agree that no one should be referred to by this term today as it violates their right to be free from degrading treatment.

- 3) People who have experienced leprosy are equal partners. Father Damien worked with the people of Kalaupapa as equal partners. They built houses together, formed funeral associations together, and planned religious celebrations together. Working side by side, they welcomed new arrivals to Kalaupapa with hot steaming coffee. Father Damien’s legacy encourages us to continue to promote partnership as an important means of ensuring the full and equal participation of individuals whose lives have been challenged by leprosy.

As we approach the canonization of Father Damien and proceed into the future, we resolve to utilize his legacy fully to promote the basic rights of all individuals, particularly those who have had leprosy.

Resolution Adopted in Rome, 30 May, 2009

### Signed by

NAME, ORGANISATION	SIGNATURE
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On behalf of IDEA members

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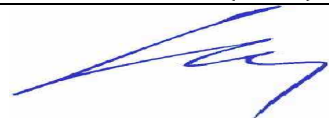
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**INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF ANTI-LEPROSY ASSOCIATIONS (ILEP)**

Mr. René Staeheli, President



Mr. Douglas Soutar, General Secretary



On behalf of ILEP Member Associations

American Leprosy Missions (ALM), USA

Association Française Raoul Follereau (AFRF), France

Associazione Italiana Amici di Raoul Follereau (AIFO), Italy



**IDEA International**



British Leprosy Relief Association (LEPRA), UK  
 Damien Foundation Belgium (DFB), Belgium  
 Deutsche Lepra und Tuberculosehilfe, Germany  
 Fairmed, Switzerland  
 Fondation du CIOMAL, Switzerland  
 Fondation Luxembourgeoise Raoul Follereau (FL), Luxembourg  
 Fontilles Luchas contro la Lepra (SF), Spain  
 Les Secours aux Lépreux (SLC), Canada  
 Sasakawa Memorial Health Foundation (SMHF), Japan  
 Netherlands Leprosy Relief (NLR), Netherlands  
 Leprosy Mission International (TLMI), UK

ITALIAN ASSOCIATION AMICI DI RAOUL FOLLEREAU (AIFO), a network organisation of Italian groups

Dr. Francesco Colizzi, President AIFO



On behalf of AIFO Member groups in Italy

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