



CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES OF SOUTHERN NEBRASKA

Hope in the Good Life

May 2025



CSS Immigration Legal Services team members with Client (center) after she passed her citizenship exam

St. Damien of Molokai | CSS Immigration Legal Services

Accompaniment every step of the way

Walking next to someone in times of illness, isolation, or uncertainty is a beautiful and challenging thing. At Catholic Social Services, we are given these opportunities every day. **Each decision to accompany someone can change not only their life but our own.**

For a young Belgian man in the 1850s, this challenge presented itself in a radical way. Born Joseph de Veuster, St. Damien of Molokai entered religious life alongside his older brother Pamphile, who was assigned to serve as a missionary priest in Hawaii. Before he could leave, however, he fell ill. Though it wasn't the path he had envisioned, Fr. Damien chose to leave his family and all he knew to take his brother's place. He was ordained a priest shortly after arriving in Hawaii.

After nine years serving in Honolulu, Damien was asked to minister to the leper colony on the island of Molokai. At the time, leprosy was misunderstood, and those diagnosed were exiled to the island with little care or support. Fr. Damien chose to live among them. He built homes, churches, and schools. He advocated for their needs and provided hope and dignity. These people who had been forgotten and uncared for were treated as friends and equals once more. Because of his close contact with the community he cared for, Fr. Damien contracted leprosy himself and died in 1889. In 2009, he was canonized and named the patron saint of outcasts.

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Jan-Mar 2025
IMPACT
CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES
IMMIGRATION
LEGAL SERVICES
PROGRAM

 **CLIENTS**
111

**SUBMITTED
FORMS**
295 

**CLIENT FEES
RECEIVED**
(NET
AMOUNT)


\$21,390.42

Hope in the Good Life



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#HopeintheGoodLife

Accompaniment every step of the way (cont.)

Like Saint Damien, our Immigration Legal Services (ILS) team at CSS walks alongside those who are often overlooked in society. We offer legal help and compassionate support to immigrants and refugees seeking safety, opportunity, and home.

Over the past year, ILS has grown significantly. Our team now includes two Department of Justice partially accredited representatives, a part-time attorney, a business manager, and law clerks from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln College of Law. ILS works hand-in-hand with our Resettlement team, continuing the mission of “welcoming the stranger” beyond the initial arrival. Becoming a thriving, established member of society doesn't happen overnight or even one year after living in the United States. Recognizing this, ILS works to guide clients through the legal process to maintain residency and build a stable future.

Updated applications, shifting qualifications, and complex requirements continue to create obstacles for our clients. Recent funding changes have removed our ability to cover costs, meaning many clients must now pay full price for legal support. Even so, our staff remains a steady source of guidance and hope.

In March, our team had the joy of attending an oath ceremony where four of our clients became U.S. citizens. Afterward, one client invited the team into their home to celebrate. **It was a joyful reminder that this work is more than paperwork. It is a journey to take together.**

As we celebrate the feast of St. Damien of Molokai on May 10, we ask for his intercession as we accompany our clients every step of the way. **St. Damien, pray for us!**



A Note to Monica, CSS Immigration Legal Services Team Member

"Hola Monica como esta! Le escribo para darle la Noticia que gracias a su Alluda! He pasado mi examen de Ciudadanía muchisimas gracias! Estoy muy Feliz y Agradecida" –ILS Client

"Hello Monica, how are you? I'm writing to share with you the news that thanks to your help, I passed my citizenship test. Thank you so much! I'm very happy and grateful."



Stay tuned for an upcoming *Hope in the Good Life* podcast with the ILS Team!