

The Hawaiïan Benedictine

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He Wasn't Who We Expected

Yesterday I watched and listened as a two year old screamed with joy. Logan had come to spend the day with Tutu (Grandma) and me at the corner park. Ah...the slides...three of them and he climbed happily to each of them, but fear gripped. Finally he saw another little guy his age go down "all by himself." Before we knew it, Logan was following. We yelled "Whee!" His face lit up in total delight. His thrill of accomplishment vibrated throughout his tiny body as he ran clapping his hands and yelling his own "Whee!" I went to the park yesterday expecting to watch a little boy... but I saw Jesus. He seems to have a habit of surprising us, doesn't He?

Obviously, if you have been following the scriptures, He had a life-long of being the 'unexpected'. He was the Long Awaited One, the Messiah, Son of David, and Savior. If we had lived then, would we have envisioned Him born to a virgin teen? And, though the scriptures foretold that He would be born in Bethlehem, most had probably glossed over the reading. After all, give us a break...tiny Bethlehem? Since no one was expecting Him, there was no room for the Son of God. Mary gave birth in a cave and placed the Almighty in a manger. I saw a suffering Haitian woman give birth in the midst of total devastation and destruction. I saw an elderly physician cradle a newborn with a head fracture in his arms in a hospital tent outside Port au Prince. I saw Jesus in the midst of squalor and desolation.

He was prefigured by Moses when the family returned from Egypt, but refugees aren't noticed, are they—unless they wind up in our domain. He grew up in a two bit town in Galilee called Nazareth. Even his apostle asked, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" He then proceeded to learn to follow Joseph in the carpentry business, so no PhD in Theology for the one so long waited. He spent 30 years working his trade, going to synagogue 'as He was accustomed to do', caring for His mother. I grasped the hand covered with calluses and looked into the tanned face of the man who arrived from the Philippines years ago and raised his family in Hawaii. I kneel daily with the "Morning Mass Gang" who sing Happy Birthday to each other, always sit in the same places, and stay to pray over the lady going in for surgery. I worship with Him, to Him, in Him.

He insisted John baptize Him, and was led into the desert to be tempted. He selected followers, performed His first sign for them, and together they traveled on foot north and south spreading the Good News.

Emmanuel was with them! He taught and preached, worked wonders and reached out to cure. When finally He arrived back in the 'old home town', He read from Isaiah and let them know the time had come. But, who did He think He was? They 'knew' this guy, He grew up down the street. No! They led Him to the cliff, but He walked



Jesus Preaches in the Synagogue by Gustave Doré

He was in the world, and the world came to be through him, but the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him.

But to those who did accept him, he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name... (Jn1:10-12)

through their midst and did not return. I saw the Face of Jesus in the child picked last to play and scorned by the others. I saw the twisted smile of Jesus in the mentally handicapped woman holding to her elderly mother's hand. I saw the saddened eyes of a mother fearing as her child left home that he might

(Cont. on pg. 2)



ON MY MIND

Dear Friends,

Reviewing the past year's worth of newsletters and seeing what was on my mind (my memory fades faster than ever) is a wonderful experience of recalling God's blessings and faithfulness over the past year.

It is also amazing how the Liturgical year keeps a kind of regularity and stability to life's progress year after year. It is a bit humbling to realize that no matter how much "progress" we make in a year's time, we still can use the Lenten season and its disciplines to renew our efforts to open our hearts and minds to the Lord's work and Word in our lives.

Sr. Ann was home in Denver for a few days in January for the funeral of her eldest brother, Anthony (he was 90). We ask you to join us in prayer for him, Sr. Ann and Tony's wife and family. Br. Isidore was back in Louisiana for his home visit the month of January and also stopped in for a brief visit at Holy Trinity Monastery in Arizona.

My Mom (Fr. Michael's sister) is with us for 8 weeks helping out here and there in the kitchen, sewing, etc. but especially helping me get my office cleaned out and organized and giving some much needed attention to our library. Mom is also due to make her final Oblation on Oblate Sunday in March before she returns to Wisconsin.

Austin is getting ready to enter novitiate at the end of March and Charles is also getting ready for that in about 3 to 6 months. Things should start heating up in preparation for the General Chapter by the time of the next newsletter. Keep praying.

May the Lord grant you a fruitful and rewarding Lent and may His Easter Glory cover you always.

*Blessings,
Fr. David*

Not Expected (cont.)

never come home. I hugged the spindly child, smiled back at the woman/child, and returned the mother's look. I ministered to Him today!

He cured the leper with His touch and gut wrenching compassion. He wrote in the dirt slowly, carefully and told the accusers to toss the first stone at the adulteress. Silence. Then the thud of a rock, followed by another resounded and the accusers each walked away. "Go now and sin no more." The Pharisees were foiled once more! And what about Levi and Zacchaeus? Tax collectors—traitors to their own. Yet here He sits talking, and dining with them! Levi is called, he follows, and becomes a new man Matthew! Jesus grieved for those whose hearts were hardened to Him, but upbraided them for their hypocrisy. Yet he loved them as much as He did the poor and outcasts. The self righteous looked with scorn upon these lowly ones...for if they were not sinners none of these misfortunes would have befallen them, right! I walked along the docks of Haleiwa where the homeless live in broken vans. I dish out food to the dispossessed. Some are unable to pay rent. Some are fried on drugs or mentally incompetent. I count the children, twenty or so. All are His children. I feed Him today, as He has fed me. I visit with Him. I touch a hand and smile at Him today.

They plotted to kill Him...so counter-cultural...so radical! He wanted to help them drop their self righteousness, to empty themselves as He had done. His desire was to



show them the Father, but like most of us, they had formed their own God in their own image and likeness! They looked for power prestige, prosperity and white stallions, not little donkeys. How could He be the Messiah, the King? His followers abandoned him, sold Him over, and denied Him. They were scared, disillusioned, and wanted no part in this gigantic mess. Besides He would undoubtedly escape, right? Wrong. He was here to do the Father's will unlike the sons and daughters of Adam! In three years He had given us a picture of the Kingdom. But, we didn't expect it to be like this, did we? So we weep, and send Judas off to hell, and can't figure out why He would make that wimp Peter the Rock. From the cross He cries out to His Father to forgive them for they did not recognize laughing Him! Mary stood beneath with young John. They recognized Him. Do we? It's easy to look back and say, "I would have followed Him to His death." But would we? Do we accept the little rejections, abandonments, harsh words, scorn of others? Or do we put on our Goody-Two-Shoe outfit and dish it out? How easy to see Him in the AID's victim, the druggie, the politician with illegal immigrants, the swindler or prostitute, the unfaithful celebrity, the scam artist? Yeah, right? Perhaps as we enter Lent, we must climb off our high horses and join Jesus on that little donkey trotting into Jerusalem to die to ourselves. He smiles at us and says, "Accompany me, my children. Let us continue to show the Face of God upon the world around us. They will recognize Me in You! And we call back, "I am just a messy little child, Lord, but You can do all things in and through me!" - *Gerry Keirnan*

The Benedictines wish you God's graces as we journey through Lent towards the promise of receiving Life abundantly from our Victorious Savior, Jesus.

Fr. Michael Celebrates 60th Jubilee

Just before the feast of Sts. Maurus and Placid, Fr. Michael casually mentioned that it would be his 60th anniversary of his vows. It took us by surprise. We did not see this anniversary coming. After the big reception event that marked his 50th ten years ago, Fr. Michael was ready for a much smaller and quieter celebration.

It was in 1948, while a student at the Univ. of Wisconsin, after serving in France during WWII, that Gerald Sawyer was challenged by a priest to change his life. To the surprise of family and friends, he soon entered St. Benedict's Abbey at Benet Lake, Wis. He was put to work in the dairy barn helping to milk 50 cows twice a day, cleaning the barn and making feed. At his first vows in 1950 he was given the name Michael. Eventually he was put in charge of the Abbey's dairy business.

When the abbey ceased its dairy business in the 1960's, Br. Michael's roles expanded to include building an agriculture school in a Costa Rica mission, general maintenance and procurator, and directing summer vocational camps for high school boys at Benet Lake.

In 1969, Br. Michael went with Fr. David Geraets and two other monks to Pecos, N.M. to reestablish it as a charismatic monastery. For 14 years, he preached at retreats, and oversaw the erection of

four new buildings and remodeling of others. He was ordained in April, 1974, the first ordination for Pecos Abbey.

In 1983, he was chosen to establish a new community in Hawaii with three other monks and Sr. Mary Jo.

In the very active early years were many missions and retreats, searching for a permanent site and the initial planning for the monastery. He became an auxiliary Air Force chaplain, first at Wheeler, then at Hickam AFB. He also became spiritual director for Basic Christian Community of Hawaii, guiding its growth for 24 years.

At the monastery, he began the practice of the community saying the rosary together, reciting the "Community Novena" after communion of each mass, and after making a pilgrimage to Medjugorje, establishing "Medjugorje Nights" on Friday evenings.

In the past ten years, there has been a gradual retirement of ministries. Yet in Fr. Michael's mind, monks don't retire. While age has forced him to work less and spend more time in prayer and reading, he always maintains a focus on community, its practical aspects, and contributing towards its future.

Fr. Michael has only gratitude to God for "being with me, sustaining me, protecting me and helping me. It is his work."



Fr. Michael Sawyer



The columbarium in the grotto in late January.

BY THE WAY...

- ☐ Work continues slowly on constructing a columbarium in the grotto area. Volunteers from Resurrection of the Lord and oblate Ted Roades have been helping us. Using steel leftover from the construction of our residential buildings, trusses were assembled and welded, brought down and welded in place. At the time of this writing, sheet metal roofing, also left over from the residence buildings, is being installed.
- ☐ On January 28, we were supplied with six new honeybee colonies.

Austin spent much of January, thoroughly cleaning some of the old hives and constructing new hives to receive the bees. The new hives include traps and filters to help keep mites and hive beetles away. We gathered as a community around the hives and had a blessing for them on Feb. 1. If the colonies can survive and grow, we might be able to have again our honey harvest in autumn.

- ☐ Fr. Tim should be back with us by the time you read this. He left Tatum, NM, after Christmas and is spending February at a hermitage

near Albuquerque and visiting friends from Pecos days. One thing he is looking forward to when he returns is warm weather.

- ☐ Our fax machine line has been having problems over the past two months making us unable to receive or transmit faxes. Phone service techs have recently diagnosed a hardware component failure in our phone system and a replacement is ordered. Service should be restored by the time you read this. Our apologies to all who were unable to send faxes to us.