



The Hawaiian Benedictine

Newsletter of the:
Benedictine Monastery of Hawaii

With the canonical title of:
Mary, Spouse of the Holy Spirit Monastery

Summer 2020

Issue #136

Our Benedictine Heritage

Saint Benedict, whose feast we celebrate on July 11, is one of the most influential saints the Church has ever produced. His Rule has been the basis of life in thousands of monasteries.

Those monasteries were powerful forces in the rebuilding of Europe's civilization after the collapse of the Roman Empire. But the Rule still lives: there are hundreds of monasteries and convents in existence today that value Benedict's spirit and enduring wisdom.

Born into a well-to-do Roman family in 480, young Benedict went to Rome for his education. But the Roman empire was beginning to disintegrate from the onslaughts of invaders. Disenchanted by the immorality he witnessed in Rome, Benedict decided to go back home to Nursia. There he felt a call to the monastic life.

With the help of a monk named Romanus, Benedict settled into a cave in the side of a steep canyon near the town of Subiaco. There he devoted himself to the prayer, fasting and poverty of a strict eremitical life. After a few years people began to become aware of him. His reputation grew.

When the abbot of a nearby monastery died, his monks looked around for someone to take the abbot's place. They heard of Benedict and pressured him to come and lead their community. Benedict acceded to their wishes, but his sense of order and communal responsibility proved to be too much for them. They tried to poison him. Benedict returned to his cave.

As time passed, however, other men drawn to a monastic form of Christian life came to Benedict for leadership and instruction. He formed a number of monasteries on the steep slope above his cave and at nearby Subiaco. But even here a problem arose. A local priest envied Benedict's fame and tried to cause trouble by introducing dancing girls into

one of his monasteries. To put an end to this kind of disturbance, Benedict decided to leave the area and start over.

This time he moved far south, to a high mountaintop between Rome and Naples where he founded the monastery that is

always associated with his fame: Monte Cassino. While there he finished shaping his Rule for monks that has had such a far-reaching influence. After many moves, Benedict remained in Monte Cassino until his death in 543.

The Rule he drew up from his life-experiences gradually spread to many European lands and became the standard guidebook for the monastic life.

Instead of the extreme ascetical practices that previously were common in monasteries, Benedict emphasized being a loyal, contributing member of the community, a contribution made possible by the virtues of humility, obedience, and brotherly love. This would effectively take the place of the severe penances that were practiced in monasteries of the time. He emphasized common prayer at different times of the day and a schedule of interspersed prayer and work. *Ora et labora* (Prayer and Work), a Benedictine motto, neatly sums up the heart of this ideal.

Praised for its moderation, common sense, knowledge

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Pat Reilly greets Fr. David on the day of his ordination: 6/10/89

ON MY MIND

Dear Friends,

After about 28 years as superior of our community I am stepping down from this responsibility. It is with a certain delight and relief that I do so. I am considerably more sad that at this time I will also be leaving Hawaii, while I will remain a member of the community. I am in the process of trying to establish residency in another Benedictine Monastery on the mainland. The potential for my return is not clear.

I would like to acknowledge my deep gratitude to the witness and support of my brothers and sisters in community, my family, our Oblates and our many many volunteers and generous friends and benefactors. I have been truly edified by the witness and contribution of our monastic community and its various members to the church and the lives of people in Hawaii.

The relationship with persons in Basic Christian Community of Hawaii, Hope Alive, Rachel's Vineyard, numerous parishes, Catholic and Protestant retreatants, our Oblates and many others has been a life-sustaining blessing for our community and for myself. The time spent with the Resurrection of the Lord parish Saturday work-day men, as well as working with other volunteers and those serving on our various advisory committees, has been personally most rewarding.

I trust that all of you who have so blessed us over these many years will continue to assist the community and its members going forward as they will continue to need that support and will hopefully continue to bless those to whom they are connected.

Be assured of my love, appreciation and prayers. I ask you to keep me in yours also.

Fr. David

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of human nature, and flexibility, the Rule of St. Benedict became the dominant guide for monks and nuns in Western Europe. Even today, there are 155 monasteries of men in the Benedictine Confederation. Other religious orders (e.g., Cistercian, Trappist, Camaldolese, etc.) also profess the Rule. Another 387 convents of women worldwide rely on St. Benedict's Rule as well.

At Waialua, our way of life is constantly nourished by the Rule. As we well know, the famed practical wisdom of St. Benedict proves its worth for religious life even today, 1500 years after the death of the holy man who composed it.

*by Jim Scully
long-time friend of the community*



Fr. David sawing limbs from the chinaberry tree at the bell tower.

Sharing About Father David

On September 8, 1983, five Benedictines were blest by Abbot David Geraets at the Pecos Monastery for the new foundation of a monastery in Hawaii. Fr. Michael, appointed superior, flew to Honolulu September 12th to look for land and a facility. On February 4th, Fr. David, Fr. Michael, and I flew to Honolulu and began building a monastery retreat facility in a large house in the Kahala area.

Fr. David was key in establishing the Benedictine spirit while overseeing the physical needs of the monastery. In every way he used his many gifts, education, and previous Benedictine experience at Benet Lake, Wisconsin, to secure, through the daily living of the Rule, the "Ora Et Labora" spirituality which Benedictines strive to live each day. We thank him for his YES to God's call to FOLLOW HIM each day in his vocation as a monk.

As a team, his support, with Fr. Michael, has had a tremendous impact on the growth of Mary Spouse of the Holy Spirit Monastery.

He will be covered daily with our prayers and love.

by Sister Mary Jo



Fr. David, Sr Mary Jo, Sr CC, and Br. Augustine at Our Lady of Sorrows

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Sr. Gerry's Final Vows

Ten men and Fr. David's favorite "Bobcat", erected the 14 crosses (weighing 300# each) into the concrete bases, on two successive Saturdays. Bishop Larry officially blessed the stations.

Fr. David frequently prayed for local leaders of our Church and State, in our daily office. His love for the Liturgy of the Church, and offering daily Mass, has supported our community prayer life for years. I've appreciated his longterm skills in editing the newsletter. He has represented our community on the Leadership Association for Religious Communities (LARC). Most recently, he has been caring for the elders in community, seeing to the details of their health needs, and assisting them in decision-making. He has been a friend and fellow community member who has been like a brother to me. I have known him as a person who has trusted in God's sovereign will.

by Sister GERALYN

The first time I met Fr. David, he picked me up at the airport for my initial retreat. I remember feeling anxious. I wondered what we would talk about on the drive back to the monastery and what I should say to make a good impression. Thankfully, Fr. David did all the work for me. I had hardly gotten in the car before he started telling me about his handful of siblings, his multitude of nephews and nieces, and their spouses and children—all in a very calm, matter-of-fact voice as if we'd known each other for decades. He made me feel immediately part of the family. And that is how I have felt for the past two years. I was drawn to the Hawaii Benedictines because this monastic community truly feels like a family. As in any family, there are disagreements and arguments, but we always rally together, talk through our differences, support one another, and genuinely love one another. And we laugh a lot.

In any family there needs to be a father, and Fr. David is a faithful father. I have never met a leader who is as humble as he is. He not only builds the buildings, administers the monastery, fixes the plumbing and electricity, celebrates Mass and offers the sacraments, but he also pitches grass, clears people's plates, and washes the dishes. He is a servant, as Jesus calls us to be: "He who would be first among you must be the servant of all." Fr. David is a remarkable combination of both gentleness and strength. His quiet faithfulness to the Rule of St. Benedict creates a spiritual force which propels the community along the pathway to God.



Fr. David's Birthday 2019

On a personal level, I arrived at the monastery in the midst of unbearable suffering. Fr. David helped bring me back to life. During our many conversations he patiently listened with healing kindness. Through word and action he helped me encounter and remember God's love. My soul is being restored. I thank God for sending Fr. David into my life, and I am thankful that his wisdom and guidance is only a phone call away.

"I was young and now I am old, but I have never seen the just man forsaken." (Psalm 37:25) I am mourning Fr. David's return to the mainland. But I am also looking forward to seeing where our Heavenly Father is leading him. I know that God will take care of his treasured and faithful son.

by Brother Scott

From the Daily Log:

MS-Fr. Michael Sawyer GS-Sr. GERALYN Spaulding
DB-Fr. David Barfknecht SW-Br. Scott Whittaker
MJ-Sr. Mary Jo McEnany AN-Br. Augustine Nguyen
CC-Sr. Celeste Cabral

Feb 26: SW's Grandma turns 104, still living at home!

Feb 29: CC, SW, and AN attend the *Mental Health First Aid for Youth* workshop at St. Stephen's Diocesan Center

Mar 1: MJ gives a talk "*Do Not Waste Your Sufferings: Getting Ready for Lent*" for Oblate Sunday

March 8-15: Students from Benedictine College spend a week with us volunteering on the island

March 9-11: CC leads a 3-day parish mission at Maria Lanakila Church on Maui

April 11: From our living room we participate in the Vigil Mass broadcast from Our Lady of Peace Cathedral

April 12: We rejoice to celebrate Our Lord's Resurrection with Mass in our chapel, followed by a delicious feast

April 13: We celebrate MS's 95th birthday

May 22: Scott and Kathy Aldinger arrive to volunteer for the summer

May 25: We celebrate AN's birthday with a barbecue and music

May 31: CC Star Gazing ministry re-opens after 2 months

June 2: CC Welcomes Artis Ohana for a stay at the Monastery

June 8: Fr. Joseph Diaz arrives to serve as our Interim Administrator

June 9: We celebrate DB's birthday with a barbecue and a champagne toast, taking turns expressing our gratitude

June 10: After the noon Angelus, in one of his last acts as Prior, Fr. David consecrates the Monastery to the care and protection of the Holy Family.

In the evening we all drive to the airport to say goodbye to our beloved prior.

God bless you, Fr. David.

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JESUS CHRIST IS LORD

Aug

2nd-8th: Fr. Michael Sweeney, OP will lead our annual community retreat

17th: SW will leave for his biennial home visit

Oct

16-18th: Rachel's Vineyard Retreat in Hawaii. Contact Sr. GERALYN for info: 808/741-3819

Basic Christian Community retreats will resume in 2021.

We pray that the pandemic may end soon. And we look forward to welcoming everyone back once it does!

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