



# The Hawaiian Benedictine

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With the canonical title of:  
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## *“Mary” Christmas... In Our Hearts*

One of the most dramatic narratives in Scripture begins with the Archangel Gabriel making a startling appearance to a young girl named Mary. After Gabriel reveals to Mary the mission entrusted to her to be the Mother of God, she gently responds, "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to thy Word." Concluding this short exchange, we hear an ominous phrase that is often overlooked: "And the angel departed from her."

Imagine for a moment - a young woman is simply living her own life in a dusty, provincial backwater of a town with her own set of hopes, dreams, and aspirations. All of a sudden, an angel appears and announces that she has been chosen to be the Mother of God. And, then, following the briefest-ever explanation, the angel departs from her.

Mary is not given a plan for what comes next, nor guidelines for what is expected of her. She is not even given any words of encouragement. The angel simply departs.

In trying to understand how Mary felt during that moment I can only imagine thoughts of bewilderment, overwhelming angst, breathtaking fear and uncertainty, and, of course, extreme insecurity in stepping out of her comfort zone into the complete unknown. Yet, on the other hand, when Mary said "yes" to God, what did she gain for herself? And, better yet, what did she gain for us?

As the story continues, we read that Mary and Joseph came down from Nazareth to Bethlehem where Mary gave birth to the Son of God. Luke adds: "Mary kept all these things pondering them in her heart" (Luke 2:19).

What was Mary pondering in her heart? No doubt the journey from Nazareth, the rejection at the inn, the birth of her son, and the fear of the unknown.

As we enter into the season of Christmas we, too, gather our thoughts and prayers and focus our heart and soul on the birth of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. For many of us, Christmas is a time swaddled in nostalgia from our youth and an occasion to focus on family and friends, a time to get out of ourselves and open up to the grander scheme of life.

With an attentiveness to Mary during Advent and Christmas, what lessons can we learn from her? How can Mary inspire us to have an uncompromising faith, not just a conventional faith? She reveals to us a

life in which faith is the core-constituent of our existence —not just a slice of the pie, but its entirety.

Have you ever had a sink-or-swim responsibility thrust upon you without much direction or guidance? No mentor? No set of directions or manual? No Youtube video to guide you along? No IT guru to pull you out of a high-tech glitch? Remember, Gabriel departed from Mary without an instruction manual on how to be the Mother of God. I can't imagine a greater sink-or-swim scenario than that.



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Recently, our monastic community here in Waiialua has been blessed with the fullness of Christ, and the faith of Mary, in many ways - some large and some small. Tangibly, we have incorporated some beautiful cedar boxes into our gardens to grow fresh herbs for the community; we have installed speed bumps on the monastery property to keep ourselves and our guests safer from passing traffic; we have been gifted with a beautiful pond feature and stunning Hawaiian mural from the Artis family, and we have been graced with Br. Augustine's technical expertise and drone-flying skills which have improved our website and online presence beyond measure. Sr. CC's idea of a waterfall and pond with a beautiful mural of Kalaupapa has created a prayer and meditation sanctuary with a vision of aquaponics to be started soon.

Perhaps most importantly, Sr. CC has just completed her first three months as our new Prioress. Excitement and optimism abound for a future full of hope and many changes being made within her vision of the monastery.

We have also been blessed with a booming increase in vocations. On October 21, Br. Augustine entered the novitiate, and Br. Anthony and Br. Tom entered postulancy. In the coming weeks, four other individuals will be visiting for a time of discernment with us. We are also blessed with Melissa and Beth who provide round-the-clock nursing care for our founder, Fr. Michael. Every Saturday evening Lulu and Carol grace us with their tremendous culinary talents—a welcome change from Sr. CC's infamous hot dog soup (which Br. Scott has readily adopted on his cooking day too). We have also recently been named an official Red Cross Emergency Shelter which is a gift and blessing to the surrounding North Shore inhabitants if the need ever arises.

All of these wonders are made possible by a young girl who was imbued with a mission much greater than any of us could ever imagine. With poise, grace and determination- despite the angel Gabriel not checking back in with Mary to offer any reassurance after his abrupt departure-she carried on nevertheless with a deeply rooted faith, a sense of trust, and with confidence that she was following God's will for her life. During this Christmas season we here at Mary, Spouse of the Holy Spirit Monastery encourage you to allow Mary to be your guide as we celebrate the birth of her Son and Savior to us all, Our Lord Jesus Christ. Merry Christmas and blessings of joy to you all!

*by Brother Tom Morris*

*Wishing you all a blessed and peaceful christmas!!!*



*The Hawaiian Benedictines*

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### **New Prioress Sr. Celeste 'CC' Cabral's Speech**

Fr. Michael, Sr. Mary Jo, Sr. Geralyn, Br. Scott, and Br. Augustine, thank you. Mahalo to you all from the bottom of my heart that you have entrusted to me your care. But more importantly, God has entrusted His care upon me to care for each and everyone of you to the best of my ability.

Bishop Larry, thank you. Fr. Bong, Fr. Aaron, and all of you that have come to be a part of this special occasion. I am humbled and I am honored to take the position as the leader, a very high calling, and that my community trusts me to be the best leader that I can be.

In the Prologue of the Benedictine Rule, St. Benedict writes, "Listen carefully to the Master's instructions and attend to them with the ear of your heart. See how the Lord in His love shows us the way of life." We're on a journey called life - we need one another. And, with what is happening in the world today I cannot imagine a life without God, who is our rock, who is the God the same as yesterday, today and forever. And, how each one of us has been called to be one of His own.

When a sheep leaves the flock, the shepherd goes to look for that lost sheep. How blessed we are to have our own Bishop Larry, the shepherd of our flock from the Diocese of Honolulu to be with us this day.





*Sister Celeste Cabral - CC*

I would like to thank each and everyone of you for coming today to be a part of this celebration. From this day forward, I as the leader of this community will do my very best to care for my flock to the best of my ability with love, with patience, with care and with trust in the Lord and with trust in our Blessed Mother - Mary, Spouse of the Holy Spirit.

I would really like to thank Fr. Michael in a special way for coming to Hawaii with a vision in 1983, and moved to this location here in Waialua in 1987. Father came with a vision. A monastery or community without a vision perishes. Fr. Michael, how blessed we are to have our founder in our presence at 95-years-young. When Fr. Michael and I embraced a few minutes ago I felt his love, I felt his strength, and I felt his care for me to be the leader of what Fr. Michael started - to see the vision. And I truly see the vision in this beautiful place in Waialua that many find their way to without even a sign on the road that says "monastery ahead."

How many people I have seen over the years, twenty years to be

exact, when I first came to this monastery as a religious sister. How many people came seeking help, seeking the Lord to heal them in time of need. And, I can honestly say I've seen just about everything that could happen in one's life. We are all the same, we are all equal. It doesn't matter what race, what color, what religion, we are all the same. We breathe the same air, but now we have to breathe it with a mask on.

But, just as this pandemic is controlling the world when we go to work or when we stay home, we must wear a mask and we must be six feet away from each other. God is even greater - God is allowing this to happen for a reason. The best is yet to come because we are all in some way affected by the pandemic.

I would also like to thank Lulu who has prepared a wonderful Mexican meal that Bishop Larry requested.

To my dear friend, Linda, and to Cat and to Trudy, and to my hanai sister Malia, to Angela, a third of Na Leo who came to perform a beautiful Hawaiian song for us - thank you my sister. And, her other half, Rick, thank you brother. Greg, can you raise your hand, please? Greg came to our aide about four years ago and he volunteers to help with our accounting. And, Anthony, who lives with us. He's a young Hawaiian man who came for help a few years ago and we took him in, and he is a great joy to have and without question will forever help where help is needed.

I would also like to recognize Lisa Gomes who is with the Diocese of Honolulu. She is a dear friend and we've done a lot of work together. So, to each and everyone of you, Larry and Irma, thank you. And, each and every one of you, thank you from the bottom of my heart for being here today. But, more importantly, I thank our Heavenly Father who made this day possible. He has provided for our every need here at the Benedictine Monastery of Hawaii as we continue to praise Him.

And, as a community, as He continues to provide for us and our way of life here on the mountain where the lighthouse is bright and those that are seeking help or those that are seeking healing come. Thank you, may God bless you all and I love you all so much.



*Welcome new Brothers*

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*Last year our friend Tom Paladino gifted us with a new website. During the pandemic, Br. Augustine has been working hard to create videos so that everyone can visit us virtually. He taught himself how to fly a drone and has produced several stunning videos that capture the beauty of the monastery from a bird's-eye view. We encourage you to take a look and be amazed at what God has built in Hawaii: [hawaiiibenedictines.org](http://hawaiiibenedictines.org)*

*If you visit the Take a Tour page, you can take a flight over the mountain: [hawaiiibenedictines.org/tour.html](http://hawaiiibenedictines.org/tour.html)*

*There are more videos available if you click on the YouTube link at the bottom of the Take a Tour page.*

*You can also follow us on Facebook at: [facebook.com/benedictinemonasteryhawaii/](https://facebook.com/benedictinemonasteryhawaii/)*

*On the website we also have a page for online donations. We are deeply thankful to all of our friends who support us in so many ways in our life of prayer and service to the Hawaiian Islands.*