



The Hawaiian Benedictine

Newsletter of the:
Benedictine Monastery of Hawaii

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

Summer 2019

Issue #132

Working with God

Like it or not, work takes up most of our time. We can just endure it, or we can try to find meaning in it, beyond the earning of a salary.

And we can find meaning aplenty in our Christian faith.

The very first book of the Bible pictures God as a worker, busy creating the world we live in. “And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested.” (Genesis 2:2 NRSV).

How did God create? With the divine Word. God *said*, “Let there be light” (Genesis 1:3). John’s Gospel tells us, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him and without him not one thing came into being” (John 1:3 NRSV). As we well know, John was speaking of Jesus, the man who was also the Son of God, the eternal Word.

Jesus of Nazareth, the Incarnate Word, grew up in the household of a common laborer. Joseph was a carpenter. Jesus most probably learned his foster father’s trade. He may even have found employment in the nearby towns around the Sea of Galilee where there was a lot of building going on.. Think of that: the Word of God may have been a kind of handyman, working for other people. What does that say about our human labors?

It says they are good. It says that our work, even the humblest, is a sharing in God’s creation. Our ability to work, to build, to grow, to assist, to care for—all of this is co-working with God.

Whatever we do, we deal with the things that God has created. We try to make good use of them and develop the initial creation for the good of all. We try to find the potential in all God has supplied us with and bring out new things and old to benefit both the environment and human life.

So work is not just drudgery. Its sole meaning is not the paycheck. It is a collaboration with the Creator. It is assisting God in the upkeep and evolving of the world. Our labors are derived from God’s and meant to serve the intentions of God for the world and the human race.



Saint Benedict, whose Rule we follow here at our monastery, understood this very well. He built work into the daily schedule of the monks. If they were able-bodied, all the monks engaged in useful activity. He called the daily prayer “the Work of God.” Benedict wanted the monks to work prayerfully. If they did that, no type of work was loftier than another. All jobs were equal if they were carried out in

union with the Creator and served the community.

Saint Benedict’s vision can enlighten us today. We are such busy people. So-called “labor-saving devices” somehow seem to have increased our workload. We now have many more things to take care of. Many of us may feel like work is threatening to consume our life. Saint Benedict’s solution is to look deeper into the nature of human effort. Understand it as an extension of our prayer and worship. It is an imitation of Jesus. It is a partnership with the Creator God. It is a holy

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ON MY MIND

Dear Friends,

In Hawaii, summer has been upon us already for a few weeks. It is in the high 80's and getting dryer as time goes on. The good thing is that the grass slows down so it is a little easier to keep up with it and get some areas mowed that don't usually get done.

My sister Jane and her husband Stephen were just here for two weeks and helped celebrate my birthday. (Jane is in the picture above presenting me with a birthday cake.) Stephen also helped me evaluate three washing machines that had stopped working over the last six months or so. Two went out to the appliance disposal place and the third was fixed, which provided a nice opportunity to work with him as we get along well. Jane had a great time with Fr. Michael.

New windows and louvers arrived today for the building where Fr. Michael and Br. Scott live. I hope they will be installed and the rooms repaired by the end of July. The next big project after that will be the solar voltaic system on the roof of the pavilion building, which needs refurbishing. Things never get a chance to get boring around here.

I am most grateful for the first Saturday work day guys, the St. John's K of C, and the many other volunteers who help us so generously.

Gracias!

Fr. David

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act to contribute our time and energy for the common good.

We cannot avoid work. It is a necessary part of living. We can, however, develop a better understanding of it. It is far more than a necessary evil. We are part of God's team, bringing order to our world and serving people's needs. It is a Godly job, a privilege. Even our humblest tasks are part of the whole and are ennobling rather than degrading. The amount of money we may make has no bearing on the dignity of our labors. The intention with which we work is the measure of our efforts.

Work done in this spirit (one might say the Holy Spirit) morphs into love. It is done for the good of others, in union with God who is Love. The Creator God pours out love upon the chaos to create and sustain a universe. We are placed on this planet to tend it and reap the

harvest so that all human beings can help one another find fuller life.

As the bishops gathered in Vatican II put it: "The Lord desires that his kingdom be spread by the lay faithful... [who] must recognize the inner nature, the value and ordering of the whole of creation to the praise of God. By their secular activity they must aid one another to a greater holiness of life, so that the world may be filled with the spirit of Christ and may the more effectively attain its destiny in justice, love, and peace.... By their competence in secular disciplines and by their activity, interiorly raised by grace, let them work earnestly in order that created goods may, through human labor, technical skill, and civil culture, serve the good of all men according to the plan of our creator and the light of his Word."

by Jim Scully

long-time friend of the community

Monastic Focus: Work

As Hawaiian Benedictines we are part of God's team. Collaborating with God means collaborating with each other. The shared effort not only is meant to sustain our bodies but to nourish our hearts and souls as well. This is what is meant by our work morphing into love, a love that becomes very concrete not only in exercising dominion over the earth but even more so in exercising dominion over ourselves in our relations with one another.

The arena where all this plays out varies from the great outdoors where our tropical paradise threatens to become a tropical jungle, to facilities and equipment entering the realm of chaos, and even to a jumble of words and numbers and musical notes. Time continues its march and it is not always easy to keep up.

Sister CC and Brother Scott fight back the vegetation while Fr. David hustles to repair broken equipment in between working on the books. Sr. Geralyn moves from cleaning the pavilion to composing the ordo for our liturgy.

She is joined by Sr. Mary Jo in preparing the music. Suddenly, Br. Scott appears working in the sacristy and taking out the garbage. Wait, Sr. CC springs into action manning the bookstore and arranging for guest lodging.

Just when all seems doomed and the monastery seems to be going under, Fr. Michael joins the kitchen clean-up crew with a horde of volunteers and rides to the rescue. And, after a few hours of well-deserved sleep, it starts all over again.

When this is seen for the first time it seems incredible. How can this place keep going?! Without the many generous volunteers the monastery would not survive. However, when one reflects that this labor has been sustained for over 30 years, it becomes apparent that another factor is involved. God is at work! He is carrying the cross. When we find ourselves tired let us yoke ourselves to Him for He is meek and humble of heart. Then we will find rest for our souls.

FROM THE DAILY LOG:

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

March 13: CC speaks to the Serra Club and the Blessed Sacrament Church

March 23: CC speaks to the Youth and Young Adults from Our Lady of Sorrows Parish Ministry

March 29: CC feeds homeless in Waiānae with the Military CWOC (Catholic Women of the Church) Wives

Apr 5: MS, DB, MJ, GS, and SW attend the movie "Unplanned" which portrays the gravity of the need to protect the unborn and their parents in our society

Apr 6: CC speaks to the youth of St. John's Parish

Apr 14: CC speaks to St. Ann's Confirmation kids

Apr 26-28: MJ helps lead the BCCH youth retreat

May 2: CC and SW feed the homeless in Waiānae with the Nelson family. We blessed them with two 40" flat screen TVs

May 12: Ginny Posenecker and her group of Hawaiian musicians surprised us all at Haliwā Joe's as we celebrated Fr. Michael's 94th birthday

May 17: DB and GS attend the priestly ordination of Fr. Rample Emaela and Fr. Vincent Anh Vu at St. Teresa's Co-Cathedral. Chuukese and Vietnamese families and friends filled the church to overflowing. The silence was broken by a loud gong and three kettle drums to announce the beginning of the ceremony. We thank God for these two new diocesan priests and pray for more.

May 19: MJ and CC celebrate our dear friend Charlotte Sullivan's birthday at the Ala Moana Hotel. CC does the prayer and blessing

May 24: GS helped to facilitate the Rachel's Vineyard Hawaii Retreat. Jesus was present in love and mercy to heal and set free those who had been suffering from the choice of abortion: mothers, fathers grandparents, aunts, uncles and friends.

May 25: CC is a guest speaker at the Marian Conference in Vancouver, Canada

May 28: Fr. Abbot John Braganza OSB gives CC a personal tour of the Westminster Benedictine Abbey located in Mission, British Columbia

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JESUS CHRIST IS LORD

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RETURN SERVICES REQUESTED



CALENDAR

July

- 7 Oblate Sunday. 2:00pm. Jason Jones. "Defending the most Vulnerable". Final oblation of novices at vespers
- 11 Feast of St. Benedict
- 13 BCCH Pre-Retreat at the Monastery
- 15 CC leads a small group to Kalaupapa
- 19-21 BCCH Young Adult/Adult Retreat, #17 (for information call Sr. Mary Jo: (808) 285-0254)
- 27 BCCH Thanksgiving Mass - 6:30 pm St. Anthony Retreat Center

Aug.

- 4 Oblate Sunday. 2:00pm. Sr. Joane Gepitulane DSP "Praying with Film: *Movie Lectio*"
- 8 Catholic Homeschool Retreat & celebration of Sr. CC's birthday. Contact Sr. CC: 637-7887

Sept

- 1 Oblate Sunday. **Begins early at 1:00pm** Sheree Pokipala. "An Experience of Religious Art".
- 14-20 Br. Anthony Maggiore OCSO directs the annual retreat for the Hawaiian Benedictines
- 28 **BCCH/Oblate Retreat and Social. Fr. Bill Petrie SSCC speaks. Topic: "Fully Alive".**

Oct.

- 6 **No oblate social picnic. Moved to Sept. 28**
- 18-20 Rachel's Vineyard Retreat (for information call Sr. GERALYN at (808) 741-3819)

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Our Monastery at Work



The community "charges up" at breakfast for a day full of work.



Sr. Geralyn and Sr. Mary Jo working on the music for the community participation in the Opus Dei.



Fr. David and The Resurrection of the Lord Parish work team conferring on a project



Fr. David takes the clippers to Fr. Michael and gives him a "working over"



Br. Scott and Sr. CC, the dynamic duo, work together to keep the lawn in shape.



The Community and friends Scott and Kathy enjoy the hard work that Mary and Mitch did in constructing our new deck