

THE PASTOR'S CORNER

MEMORIAL OF ST. MARIANNE COPE

"I am hungry for the work and I wish with all my heart to be one of the chosen ones, whose privilege it will be to sacrifice themselves for the salvation of the souls of the poor Islanders... I am not afraid of any disease, hence, It would be my greatest delight to minister to the abandoned lepers."

THUS MOTHER MARIANNE COPE responded to the letter of the Bishop of Honolulu asking her to send sisters to minister to the lepers of Hawaii and on the island of Molokai where Father (Saint) Damien had begun his work with the outcast.

Today, Sunday, is the day we would celebrate liturgically the memorial of Saint Marianne Cope who was canonized at Rome on October 21, 2012 by Pope Benedict XVI. Unlike the feast days of saints in whose name a church may be consecrated, St. Marianne's feast does not take precedence over a Sunday celebration. Nevertheless, one could imagine St. Joseph and St. Thomas of Canterbury, patrons of our merged parish, to be congratulating her on her "birthday" in heaven. (It also happens to be her actual birthday.)

When she was beatified in 2005, Pope Benedict described and marked an extraordinary life:

"Marianne Cope's life was one of profound faith and love which bore fruit in a missionary spirit of immense hope and trust. In 1862 she entered the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of Syracuse where she imbibed the particular spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi, dedicating herself wholeheartedly to spiritual and corporal works of mercy.... While Mother Marianne was Superior General of her Congregation, the then Bishop of Honolulu invited the Order to come to Hawaii and work among the lepers. Leprosy was spreading rapidly and causing unspeakable suffering and misery among the afflicted. Fifty other Congregations received the same plea for assistance, but only Mother Marianne, in the name of her Sisters, responded positively.

True to the charism of the Order and in imitation of St. Francis, who had embraced lepers, Mother Marianne volunteered herself for the mission with a

trusting "Yes"! And for 35 years, until her death in 1918, our new Blessed dedicated her life to the love and service of lepers on the islands of Maui and Molokai.

Good intentions and selflessness alone, however, do not adequately explain her vocation. It is only the perspective of faith which enables us to understand her witness - as a Christian and as a Religious - to that sacrificial love which reaches its fullness in Jesus Christ. All that she achieved was inspired by her personal love of the Lord, which she in turn expressed through her love of those abandoned and rejected by society in a most wretched way."

Robert Louis Stevenson, the author of *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped*, who had visited Father Damien and Mother Marianne, and had written an impassioned defense of Father Damien when he was attacked by Protestant clergy on the island, dedicated this poem to Mother Marianne:

to Reverend Sister Marianne
Matron of the Bishop Home, Kalaupapa

*To see the infinite pity of this place,
The mangled limb, the devastated face,
The innocent sufferers smiling at the rod,
A fool were tempted to deny his God.*

*He sees, and shrinks; but if he look again,
Lo, beauty springing from the breast of pain!*

—
*He marks the sisters on the painful shores,
And even a fool is silent and adores.*

Robert Louis Stevenson
Kalawao, May 22, 1889