Shakka Catholicism
(Shakka: Term used by Hawaiians meaning “hang loose”)

Catholicism is a widely practiced religion with numerous devout followers. However, does the location that a catholic practitioner lives in directly affect their personality and views on the world? Are culture and religion directly interconnected? I think this is truly so, where a catholic living in Maui is significantly different from one living on the mainland. I want to determine the way people act and live in contrast to the location in which they live, and have lived for many years. The subject of my interviews was my aunt Pat Stevens. My aunt Pat lives in Maui and I wanted to contrast her view on life, people and the world in comparison to those Catholics here on the mainland. My aunt is a practicing catholic who has lived in Maui for many years. Because of this, her lifestyle has been significantly changed, where she now has a sort of “Hawaiian” twist on her ways as a catholic.

My relationship with my aunt helps me to ask questions calmly and gives me the ability to instantly connect as I interview her. There is not any sense of shyness or the fear of disrespect for anything asked or probed for in the interview because she is my aunt and the environment is truly calm and tranquil. The fact that I am asking questions and that I am interested in her practice intrigues her and allows her to tell the practice through her own eyes. My age, sex, and aspects to who I am do not hinder or interfere with my interview in anyway; I am already accepted and allowed to ask questions freely. I interviewed my aunt first in person and then I had an interview with her over the phone.
once she got back to Maui after her visit to the mainland. This was a great way for me to interview her because in one session she was away from home answering questions and the other she was back in her natural surroundings. It would have been best if I could have followed her to mass or around her home town as I asked her questions about her live and religion but that would have entitled me traveling to Maui. Sadly this could not have been achieved but I do think that the phone interview was important, because my aunt had the chance to attend her home town church and get back to her life as I asked my follow up questions. The data that I collected directly shows how the location of a practitioner of a certain religion directly correlates to how they act and live out their life. My aunt is rather different from the Catholics around where I live on the mainland. So for my thesis and questions to be asked, she was the optimum person to interview.

Despite the interview being over the phone, from my aunt’s end, I can hear the Hawaiian birds and the wind blowing past the mouthpiece on the phone. I can hear can hear my uncle in the background talking to my aunt about something. Being on the phone reminds me of when I did visit Maui last summer. When every morning I woke up in Maui I felt ecstatic about where I was. The “annoying” birds chirping outside that the natives hated seemed to be a natural alarm clock that I looked forward to every morning. I remember my aunt’s home, a small and tranquil house. Her house is cozy and inviting: everything from the grass in the yard to the mountains miles away seemed to beg to be put on a postcard due to their magnificence. I could tell by the tone of my aunt’s voice that she was calm and yet very excited to receive my call. She was relaxing in the living room and eventually moved to the backyard to sit on the bench outside. On my end of the conversation the fog was rolling in bringing a chill down my spine. But, I knew that the
warmth and security of my home was just a few feet away. I heard the birds that have been looking for mates and making nests for their future offspring. I can hear my mother in the kitchen as she talks to my father. Her voice reminds me of my aunt Pat. Their connection with each other is so close and immense. As I probed farther into my aunt’s practice and lifestyle, I asked her if her faith has ever faulted. She said “My faith has never faulted. Even when I could see myself doubting my religion, I knew that what had happened was God’s will.” Even in times of great despair, my aunt has never doubted what she believes in. Through thick and thin, she has always had her religion to help her through her troubles.

I wondered what caused her to believe in this religion. She replied to the inquiry with “Our parents raised us Catholic and I have always seen the lord in people and the world. I have always seen the Holy Spirit in the people that I love and care for. Because of this I know what truly is to be believed.” When asked what affects does she personally see in herself for believing in this practice and faith she said “I see how I am more accepting and more open to the world. I am more of a forgiving person and I see the lord in people even if they do not believe he is there.” She also stated, “I am more of a positive person”, where she does not think as negatively as she might if she did not see the lord’s will in the events that occur in our lives. I also asked if her home in Maui affected the way she lived and her religion. She said that she can see how she has more of a “laid back” lifestyle. My aunt is so calm and positive where she takes everything in with a positive outlook. It is seen how her home in Maui has altered her mentality and religious practices. As I interviewed her I remembered the first session. When we sat outside in my backyard of my house discussing the practice, as the wind was gently
blowing around as the wildlife went through their daily routine. I remember the clouds in
the sky drifting slowly by with the assistance of the wind. The birds were chirping and a
hawk in the sky was looking for a meal. My aunt’s voice was clam and inviting, just like
the second session. She was at ease discussing what she truly believes in during both
sessions. When asked what aspects to the practice does she enjoy she said “I enjoy the
way I live my life, where I am a peaceful and forgiving person.”

She is kind to all and forgives people for mistakes that they have made through
the trials of life. She stated that she enjoys the rituals of mass, prayer and faith. She also
enjoys and embraces the way of life and the faith she is devoted to. When asked if she
would change anything about the religion she said “I don’t see it necessary to change
Catholicism directly, but I would like to see a change in the attitudes of some Catholics
on the mainland. How some Catholics on the mainland do not truly give people chances
that they do not see fit based solely on stereotypes or first impressions. The rituals that
my aunt Pat practices are mass and prayer. She attends mass regularly in Maui: the
priests read excerpts from the bible, interpret and evaluate them for the community with
the Maui twist. During mass Holy Communion is received, the metaphorical blood and
body of Christ. The prayers that my aunt recites help her in times of need, when she
needs strength to prevail through the trial of this world. Prayers such as “Hail Mary” and
“Our Father” are recited as well as personal prayers. When asked what aspects of the
religion has my aunt has taken that are used in her own life she replied, “Kindness to all,
faith in the afterlife, where our actions here on earth affect our afterlife, the ways in
which I live my life from the teachings of Catholicism and that there is always someone
to hear and help you when your in need.” Pat believes entirely in the religion and the
aspects held within the religion. She believes in the holy trinity composed of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, along with faith in saints and the pursuit of eternal happiness in heaven. The practice has helped her in her life by giving her strength in times where it has been hard to go on, as well as giving her aspects in which to better live her life. One way that my aunt’s faith has greatly helped her in her life was when my cousin Mike died. Her faith gave her the strength to go one with life and see that he was now in a better place, that place being heaven. The death of my cousin uprooted our family tree and everyone had their own way of dealing with the death. My aunt’s way was her faith which helped her deal and cope with the pain and the loss.

The meaning behind the discussions we had was to see the practice of Catholicism through the eyes of someone who lives in Maui in contrasts to those on the mainland. It was interesting to see the difference in the outlook of people and the world from someone who lives in an entirely different community and culture. I can see and interpret how the location of my aunt has benefited her directly in the ways she lives, views the world, and practices Catholicism. She is more of an accepting person, one who is laid back and caring. A person who sees you for what you truly are as opposed to seeing just your outer shell. This data that I have collected from interviewing my aunt supports my idea that the location of someone directly correlates to the religion in which they practice. It was nice to contrast my aunt’s lifestyle as a Hawaiian catholic to the Catholics who attend church here on the mainland.

This was a very intriguing and remarkable experience--to see the faith and devotion of someone who follows a particular practice without hesitation or doubt. I also learned how location directly affects a practitioner’s mentality and way of life. I chose
this topic for my fieldwork paper because Catholicism has always been around me in my family. However, I had never pursued Catholicism through the eyes of another who lives in another place. I am extremely pleased with the outcome of this project.

References Cited

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Stevens, Pat (2007, April 24). Telephone Interview (Aromas, CA- Maui)