

Divine Hedge of Protection Preserves Hawaiian Church

Since last Tuesday, the wildfires that have ravaged the Hawaiian island of Maui have caused massive ruin and havoc, including the tragic loss of 93 lives. Although many homes and business have been reduced to rubble, a nearly two-centuries-old church in Lahaina has become a merciful symbol of encouragement to those affected by the devastation.

Maria Lanakila Catholic Church on Waine Street in downtown Lahaina, which has stood since 1846, suffered minor roof damage. The palm trees next to the historic church that serves between 700 and 800 families were charred.

“For us, it’s like a miracle,” Monsignor Terrance Watanabe, pastor of the nearby parish of St. Anthony’s, told the Honolulu Star-Advertiser. “All of Lahaina town has been consumed by fire. It’s all gone. The church is still standing, as is the rectory. The school has been a little bit affected.”

On TikTok, user Jeffrey Domdoma wrote of God’s apparent hedge of protection around the church, “May she be the beacon of hope to the people of Lahaina! Praise the Lord ... upon this rock I will build my church! Come and follow me. ...”

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More than 1,000 people reportedly remain missing amidst the destruction. It has been reported that an unknown number of people have been “thought to have perished in their cars” while trying to escape the “hellish” flames. More than 14,500 people were evacuated from the island in the first two days since the fires erupted.

The Independent reported that one survivor, Kekoa Lansford, told the BBC of “dead bodies in the water floating.”

In addition to Maria Lanakila Catholic Church, a 150-year-old banyan tree appears to have survived the fires. With 47 trunks, the tree was severely scorched by flames.

Imported from India in 1873, it is the oldest living banyan tree in the United States. It was planted at only eight feet tall, but now stands over 60 feet and spans nearly two acres, the Lahaina town website reads.

✖ The exact cause of what began the blaze is unknown. but dry conditions and high winds gusting between 70 and 80 mph fueled the flames. More than 5,000 structures have been destroyed..

A Hawaiian utility company has come under scrutiny for not cutting the power to reduce the fire risks. The Washington Post reported that, before the wildfires, Hawaiian Electric did not have a plan to shut off power in certain lines in advance of the dangerous winds.

In the past couple of years, heavily destructive wildfires have broken out across the country, including those in California in 2018 and Colorado in 2021. These have led many to wonder if they are only part of the natural disasters in the end times mentioned in Luke 21 in the Bible.

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