

It's often said that those who don't study and know history are doomed to repeat things that have already occurred. History comes in all types of layouts, some interesting, some exciting, and often some sad. Persecution often drives change and being knowledgeable on the causes are important to know so they can be understood as well as not done over again. Accepting what others believe instead of creating conflict and distrust has many examples throughout history.

One example is the persecution of Hawaiian Catholics in the mid-19th Century on Maui. Being open to what others believe keeps events like these from happening. Those who help can also have an effect. In this case, there were many Catholics living in Wailuku at this time. One day the Catholics were ordered by the government to build a Protestant church but they refused, instead volunteering to fix the roads in the area.

While the government approved this request, the Catholics were then ordered to send their Keiki to Protestant schools to which the Catholics again refused. They were then arrested, bound, and taken to Lahaina; more specifically, they were forced to walk the 22 miles to Lahaina and were only given water and Noni fruit, which is very bitter, as supplies for the very hot march. Upon reaching Lahaina, King Kamehameha III saw them and ordered their release. He would later issue an edict promoting religious tolerance.

The persecution of this group of Catholics had an unintended side effect: Catholics decided that when a member was persecuted for their faith, others would join in and support them. This came into play later when the Protestant missionaries urged a judge to issue an order to arrest Catholics in Kahikinui. They then were marched 90 miles through Hana, Ko'olau, Hamakua, and ultimately Wailuku. As those arrested proceeded, other Catholics and non-Catholics joined the procession while other residents along the way provided water and food.

It took a month to finally arrive in Wailuku and as the group was now over 100, the judge couldn't imprison them all and everyone was released without punishment. The missionary's plan backfired and instead of reducing the Catholics, 4000 Maui residents instead joined the Catholic faith. For more details about this story including the efforts of Helio Koa'eloa being named the Apostle of Maui, see the Mei 2023 issue of OHA's Ka Wai Ola <https://kawaiola.news/columns/ka-naauao-o-na-kupuna/bound-by-ropes/>