



St. Roch ☪ St. Joachim



Christ is Risen!

St. John Vianney Parish and School  
920 Keolu Drive, Kailua, HI 96734



Easter Blessings

Holy Rosary  
Church

Pahala, Hawaii

Saint Anthony of Padua

1627 B Mill Street • Wailuku, HI 96793

Wishes you and yours a Joyous Easter!  
Join us for Sacred Triduum

-Wednesday, April 20-  
Tenebrae Services, 6pm

-Holy Thursday, April 21-  
Mass of the Last Supper, 6pm

-Good Friday, April 22-  
Liturgy of the Lord's Passion, 6pm

-Holy Saturday, April 23-  
Vigil Mass, 8pm No confessions

-Easter Sunday, April 24-  
Mass @ 7am & 9:30am,  
no evening Mass



Bethany Hamilton, second from right, attends a special screening of "Soul Surfer" in New York City with her family. From left to right, Bethany's sister-in-law Becky (wife of Noah Hamilton), brother Noah, mom Cheri, father Tom, and brother Tim.

## 'Surfer' embraces family's faith through tragedy

*Hamiltons worked closely with directors and cast to ensure the story was told correctly*

Story and photos by  
Darlene J.M. Dela Cruz  
Hawaii Catholic Herald

**H**awaii fans of surfing and cinema who appreciate stories of faith, resilience and renewal will find soul-swelling inspiration in movie theaters this Easter season.

"Soul Surfer," a film based on the story of Kauai native Bethany Hamilton, opened nationwide on April 8. Chronicling Hamilton's struggle and recovery after losing her left arm in a 2003 shark attack, "Soul Surfer" is the latest Hollywood endeavor to bring Christianity to mainstream media. It is ideal Easter entertainment.

"This film brings to life on the big screen the reality of how to apply the virtue of faith to experiences of extreme suffering and adversity," said Alexis Walkenstein, vice president of media and communications at the Maximus Group, a Catholic media marketing organization based in Georgia.

Walkenstein and the Maximus Group were involved in organizing a special April 6 screening of "Soul Surfer" in New York City. The Hawaii Catholic Herald was one of several Catholic media invited to the event, which included discussions with the Hamilton family and the film's stars and production crew.

"Soul Surfer" director Sean McNamara, a Catholic, was present at the New York premiere. McNamara said he first met Hamilton at the nondenominational church her family attended on Kauai. Hamilton's bright, persevering spirit motivated him to take on the film project.

"The movie is not about surfing, to me," McNamara said. "It was about that no matter what she does, she can be inspirational for other people."

McNamara has been making family-friendly films and TV shows, including several credits for Disney, since the 1980s. He said he enjoys making films like "Soul Surfer," which promote a wholesome and positive message for all ages.

"When we were writing it, we were thinking, 'What do all Christian kids get to see? What's a good movie to go see that's not violent or terrible?'" he said. "I want to make movies that inspire me, like 'Rocky,' 'Rudy,' 'October Sky' ... ones that filled my heart with emotion to go out and do something worthwhile."

According to Hamilton, the film took "a long five years" to produce. Casting began with AnnaSophia Robb, now 17, chosen to play the young, blonde surfer heroine. Hamilton's mom Cheri had seen Robb in the film "Bridge to Terabithia" and said Robb would be "perfect" for the

"Soul Surfer" lead role.

Helen Hunt and Dennis Quaid were cast to portray Cheri and Tom Hamilton. Lorraine Nicholson — daughter of actor Jack Nicholson — was selected to play Bethany's best friend, Alana Blanchard. Actor Kevin Sorbo and former Mrs. Hawaii Arlene Newman-Van Asperen rounded out the film's primary parts as Blanchard's parents.

"Soul Surfer" also marks the acting debut of country music star Carrie Underwood, who plays Hamilton's youth ministry leader, Sarah Hill. McNamara said he wasn't too familiar with Underwood at first, but took a chance on the "American Idol" winner after a promising taped scene reading.

"She was raw, but she had that ability," McNamara said.

**Filming the shark attack**

The cast came to Hawaii for filming in early 2010. Many of the surfing scenes were shot on Oahu's North Shore, but the cast and crew also traveled to Tahiti to shoot in the region's famous big waves. Hamilton herself did a lot of the surfing shown in the movie.

The most crucial water scene, where Hamilton is attacked by a 14-foot shark, was a delicate subject debated several times over by the film's producers.

"It was challenging to work with everyone who had their own

picture of how the shark attack should be portrayed," said Hamilton. "I didn't want to overly dramatize and scare people with sharks. But it was really similar to how it actually happened."

According to McNamara, the cinematic crux of the attack lay less in how it would be dramatized, and more in figuring out the most timely point to insert it into the film.

"I didn't want to put it in the first five minutes — I wanted to get to know and fall in love with the Hamilton family and with Bethany," McNamara said.



Actress AnnaSophia Robb, right, plays the role of Bethany Hamilton in "Soul Surfer."



Film director Sean McNamara greets guests.

"At the end of 'Act 1,' per se, generally a lead character will make some big decision. She's just got attacked, she can't, as an active character, make a decision being in a hospital bed. So let's come up with the decision that she decides to live," McNamara said.

It's at this point in "Soul Surfer" that the characters' Christian values are particularly reflected. Youth minister Sarah Hill said she was en route to Hanalei Elementary School when she received the call about the attack. In the film, she is shown as a rock of faith to the Hamilton family in their time of distress.

"I prayed, 'Lord, how do I minister to them?'" Hill said at the New York City premiere. "That faithful moment of Christ just meeting me in the car, just gave me (the Bible verse) Jeremiah 29:11." ["For I know the plans I have for you."]

"Bethany had always been a stand-out kid, and the Lord had told me he was going to use her as a voice," Hill said. "I feel they give an accurate portrayal of what a youth leader is to a child."

*"My family and I are very happy with it. We worked very hard to fix up scenes that weren't accurate or didn't have the feel of us. I'm stoked with it."*

— Bethany Hamilton

The Hamilton family said they worked closely with McNamara to ensure that "Soul Surfer" gave a true account of their family's beliefs. According to Bethany's older brother Noah, many script revisions were done to "make it (the film) relevant, but not too preachy."

Executive producer David Tice said he was eager to invest in "Soul Surfer" because he felt that Hamilton's strong Christian foundation would attract audiences to a different kind of female film hero.

"She had the ultimate adversity, and here she overcame it — she did it with class and grace," Tice said. "I saw this opportunity, and that there was a faith-based component to the story. That was crucial. It gave me unwavering confidence in this film."

Hamilton, now 21, said she has adjusted well to life after the attack, and continues to compete in professional surfing competitions around the world. She also has been traveling to promote "Soul Surfer," and is excited about the movie's turnout.

"My family and I are very happy with it," Hamilton said. "We worked very hard to fix up scenes that weren't accurate or didn't have the feel of us. I'm stoked with it."

Noah Hamilton said he reached out to Hawaii church groups from different Christian denominations earlier this year to promote a pre-screening of "Soul Surfer" on Oahu. He said several Catholic parishes were very supportive of the film.

Walkenstein of Maximus Group said she hopes the con-

*"I want to make movies that inspire me, like 'Rocky,' 'Rudy,' 'October Sky' ... ones that filled my heart with emotion to go out and do something worthwhile."*

— Sean McNamara, director

temporary approach taken by "Soul Surfer" will bring more Christian and Catholic values to the mainstream movie market in the future.

"The courage to tell her (Bethany's) story — not only on the part of the Hamilton family, but the conviction of those in the entertainment industry who make a film like this accessible to the mainstream — will hopefully pave the way for similar story lines that inspire hope, ignite faith, and capture hearts," Walkenstein said.

Bethany also travels to Thailand with her church to aid tsunami victims. "Love is more powerful than any fear, bigger than any tidal wave," she says.

Directed by Sean McNamara ("Raise Your Voice"), "Soul Surfer" is that Hollywood rarity: a film that is not afraid to talk about God or to show a happy, well-adjusted family that makes faith its foundation.

The cinematography is stunning. The Aloha State has never looked so beautiful, and the surfing scenes are thrilling, putting viewers out on the water and inside the waves. Digital effects convey Bethany's disability and her efforts to overcome it.

Despite the intensely emotional (but nongraphic) shark onslaught and its aftermath, "Soul Surfer" can be enjoyed by parents and mature young people alike. The Catholic News Service classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested. Some material may not be suitable for children.

McAleer is a guest reviewer for Catholic News Service. More reviews are available online at [www.usccb.org/movies](http://www.usccb.org/movies).

### REVIEW

## Inspiring film shows power of trust in God

By Joseph McAleer  
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK

The true story of a teenage girl who overcame a horrific shark attack to rise to the top of her sport is translated to the big screen in "Soul Surfer" (Tri-Star), an uplifting film about the power of faith and perseverance.

Bethany Hamilton (AnnaSophia Robb) is a happy, ordinary 13-year-old living in Hawaii with her parents (Helen Hunt and Dennis Quaid) and two brothers. The entire family surfs, but Bethany shows the most promise, winning competitions and gaining a sponsor.

When not at the beach, Bethany's family is often in church, where sermons are given by youth-group leader Sarah (country singer Carrie Underwood in her film debut).

Sarah's message? Trust in the Lord and his purposes, as re-

vealed in Jeremiah 29:11: "For I know well the plans I have in mind for you, says the Lord."

No one could have predicted God's plan for Bethany on Halloween morning 2003: While paddling out with friends to catch a wave, Bethany is attacked by a 14-foot tiger shark, which bites off her arm. In a flash, her life and dreams are changed forever.

The depiction of the attack and its aftermath, while not overly explicit, is nonetheless disturbing.

Surprisingly, while her family and friends fall to pieces, Bethany is serene and composed. With only a few "Why me?" moments (including one where she snaps the arm off her Barbie doll), Bethany accepts her fate and is determined to surf again, whatever the odds. Faith in God remains her anchor, and the fuel for her inexhaustible determination.



CNS photo/Tri-Star

"You can do all things through him who gives you strength," Sarah reminds Bethany. "You pray and you listen for what comes next. Something good will come out of this."

And it does. Soon Bethany is competing — and winning — at surfing events again. And she uses her newfound celebrity to inspire the disabled and others to follow their dreams.