

THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF ST. JOHN VIANNEY PARISH AUGUST 2022

COMMEMORATIVE BOOKLET
(Created by Earl Walker)

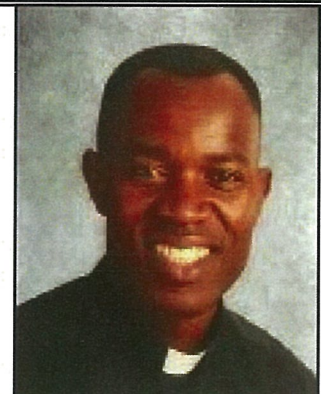
2010's



FR TOM GROSS



PASSING OF THE PARISH KEYS



FR PETER MITI

ST. JOHN VIANNEY PARISH RECEIVED A NEW PASTOR AFTER 19 YEARS

After being the pastor of our parish for 19 years, Fr. Thomas Gross retired on June 30, 2015. Fr. Tom had often said he felt very blessed to be at St. John Vianney Parish and School. Over the years he enjoyed ministering to the wonderful people in our vibrant parish and working with various committees and organizations. However, he eagerly wanted to give up the administrative part of being a pastor, although he still loved celebrating Mass. On May 16, our parish held a wonderful retirement dinner for him in our parish hall.

Born on January 3, 1947 in Minnesota, Fr. Tom was baptized in the Lutheran Church. His family joined the Catholic Church and later Tom entered the seminary in Toronto, Canada and was ordained. He moved to Hawaii and was welcomed into the Diocese of Honolulu and assigned to various parishes and finally was assigned to our parish on September 1, 1996.

Father Thomas Gross had served as the administrator of the Diocese of Honolulu during the 14-month spell between the departure of Bishop DeLorenzo and the installation of Bishop Larry Silva.

On January 3, 2015, which was his birthday and his 40th year of ordination to the priesthood, he decided to retire and enjoy his retirement years in Las Vegas. However, with his love of Hawaii and his love of our parish we anticipate his returning to visit us often.

On July 1, 2015 Fr. Peter Miti was assigned as the sixth pastor of our parish. Parishioners requested from Bishop Larry Silva that Fr. Peter become our pastor since he had served as our associate pastor years earlier. After his installation on October 31st by Bishop Larry Silva, a grand reception was held that evening on the Fellowship Lanai.

Born in Zambia as one of 10 children, Fr Peter saw poverty, disease and a deteriorating quality of life for thousands of people in Africa. A large part of the problem was HIV and AIDS that was taking Africa by storm. He became a member of the Passionists Order in neighboring Botswana in 1995 and worked with AIDS patients. Fr. Peter decided to move back home and become ordained in the Diocese of Zambia. The bishop there noted he was then 29 years-old, too old, in the bishop's opinion, to become a priest in his diocese. In 2001 Fr. Peter moved to Hawaii to join a newly forming Oratory order. He then traveled to Rome where he studied for two years under Pope John Paul II. In 2005, he returned to Hawaii, and joined our Diocese. Ordained in 2007, he was assigned to several other parishes before finally being assigned to us.

Fr. Peter has inspired us each week with dynamic sermons and with his charismatic personality, and has enjoyed spending time with students in our school.

MARDI GRAS CELEBRATIONS



The most popular social event in our parish was the annual celebration of Mardi Gras. Each year our parish hall was transformed into a street in the famous French Quarter of New Orleans, complete with three sidewalk cafes. Revelers could watch all the festivities from Café Du Monde, Brennan's or Antoine's restaurants. Each had a stage where various performers entertained the crowd with their talents. Genuine, delicious, mouth-watering, French-Louisiana food was served at Le Café Louisiane and thirst-quenching drinks were available at Pat O'Brien's Pub.

The evenings culminated with the Mardi Gras Parade of Celebrities. Festive marchers snaked their way throughout the hall to the tune of "When the Saints Go Marching In!" The parade ended underneath the anticipated, gigantic balloon drop, filled with hundreds of green, gold and purple balloons. (green represents faith, gold represents power and purple represents justice). "Mardi Gras" is French for "Fat Tuesday," also called Shrove Tuesday.

Mardi Gras traditionally is the last opportunity for merrymaking and indulgence in food and drink before the fasting of Lent.



RENOVATION DEBT PAID OFF EARLY

The renovated sanctuary for St John Vianney Parish had been rededicated in September 2006. Although most of the cost of construction was paid through the generous support of parishioners, a portion of the construction cost was financed through a loan from the Diocese of Honolulu. By 2017, that debt had been reduced to \$650,000 and was on track to be paid off (with interest) by November 2024. Father Peter Miti observed that the sooner we paid off that debt, the sooner our parish would be able to support our missions.

So, the Parish Pastoral Council appointed a diverse group of individuals and tasked them to address those concerns. This group launched the St. John Vianney Appeal in September 2017 which was a five year stewardship campaign. The goal was to raise \$950,000 over five years to pay off the church renovation debt, meet pressing repair and maintenance needs of the facilities and to fund our Parish's pastoral plans, programs and ministries.

By the end of 2017, pledges for the Appeal exceeded the goal. By March 2019 the debt to the diocese was eliminated, five and a half years early! Remaining funds have been used to design a proposed renovation of the parish hall and to tackle some expensive campus repairs. The Appeal is scheduled to be completed by the end of August 2022.

PASTORAL COUNCIL SETS FOUR PARISH PRIORITIES

In 2015 the Pastoral Council adopted the Diocesan Strategic Priorities. A committee was created for the following priorities: Faith Formation, Leadership Development, Strengthening of Marriage and Family Life, and Youth and Young Adult Ministry. The Faith Formation Committee's first effort was to start scheduling monthly Adoration services. It also hosted between two and three adult Bible studies each year. It also started a series of yearlong focuses on various Catholic subjects like "The Mass," "Apologetics," "Reading the Bible as a Family," and "St Joseph." The committee has also been educating parishioners on novenas and The Divine Mercy Devotion.

The Leadership Committee became a resource for the other committees and groups. It conducted a series of leadership training workshops and updated the Parish directory of our various ministries.

The Marriage and Family Life Committee began hosting the Marriage in Christ seminars for couples to renew their love and affection for each other and celebrate the presence of God in their marriage. They recognized couples that have been married for over ten years one weekend during all Masses and also hosted a dinner for couples married over 50 years.

The Youth and Young Adults Committee started numerous new activities for teens and young adults. It began a youth-led Mass each first Saturday of the month. A Youth Praise and Worship band was created and continues to inspire parishioners with their enthusiasm and inspiring songs

BREAKFAST WITH THE BISHOP



ST JOHN VIANNEY PARISH SCHOOL



The School Board created a ten-year strategic plan in 2010. It contained many goals and objectives for our parish school to achieve continued growth and success as well as financial security.

Mrs. Caryn DeMello (pictured above) was chosen as the school's newest principal in 2013. She has over two decades of experience as a teacher and administrator. Under her leadership the school has thrived as a vital institution for educating children in our community.

The school began remodeling the John Read Center in 2013 to update its classrooms and create new ones. A new science classroom-lab was constructed on the 2nd floor. The following year, a remodeled art studio along with a modern computer lab-technology center and a resized library were created. On the first floor, where the older library had been, a much needed 3-year-old early center was developed expanding our enrollment. The entire project was completed by the year 2015.

The school celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2015 with special events throughout the year, that included school concerts and a visit by sisters of the religious order that opened the school in 1965.

Breakfast with the Bishop events brought the entire parish family together and helped raise over \$350,000 to complete the John Read Center remodel and to create funds for the Welcome Grant Program which assists with tuition assistance.



PARISH DEACONS

In 2010, St. John Vianney Parish was blessed to have four deacons in residence, Walter Yoshimitsu, Clarence DeCaires, Lauren Wong, and Jerry Tokars. By 2019, we mourned the loss of one deacon and celebrated the retirement of a second one.

Deacon Lauren Wong was born in Waialua, Oahu, on Jan. 10, 1941, and grew up on a sugar plantation. He attended St. Michael School and graduated from St. Louis High School in 1958. He was ordained as a deacon and assigned to our parish in 1987. Lauren had a career as a pharmacist for Longs drugstore and was known for his gentle, caring and generous spirit. He also served as the chairman of the diocesan Deacon Council for 12 years with wife Hazel as secretary. In March 2017, Lauren left us to be with his Savior. His funeral Mass was well attended with many of his St. Louis High School classmates in attendance.

Hazel found a reflection that her husband had written about the diaconate in 2000. In it he said, "I have been afforded a great opportunity to grow in faith and to respond to God's love. With all of this I am able to serve people with his love and care."

Deacon Walter Yoshimitsu was ordained in December 1984 and assigned to our parish in 1985. Over the years he has been involved in a range of parish and diocesan volunteer and ministry work including as an assistant chaplain at the Women's Correctional Facility in Kailua. But it wasn't until he retired from Campbell Estate in 2000 that he started working for the diocese directly. He served as the executive director of the Hawaii Catholic Conference, which is the diocese's legislative and public policy arm and he was well respected in the Hawaii State Legislature. Deacon Yoshimitsu organized Respect Life ministry work and oversaw prison ministry volunteer work in the diocese for many years, a passion that remains close to his heart. Walter retired as a deacon in December 2018 but he and wife Francis remain active participants in parish activities. The parish gave him a well attended farewell party in May 2019.

As of December 2019, Deacon Clarence DeCaires, (ordained in 1987) and Deacon Jerry Tokars, (ordained in 2007) continued to serve St. John Vianney Parish.



CHURCH AS A CONCERT VENUE



St. John Vianney Parish Church has been the venue for several local musical groups. Its sound system, good acoustics, air conditioning and plentiful parking make it a much sought out location. Since many of these concerts draw nonmembers of our parish, hosting these concerts has the added benefit of being a subtle evangelization tool.

Our school music program has been the most frequent user of the church. The music teacher conducted both a winter and a spring concert featuring the school's band, orchestra and choral groups. Parents and parishioners enjoyed listening to the student talents.

The Windward Choral Society has performed in our church about 12 times. They promote the joy, love, appreciation and value of multi-cultural choral music within the Windward O'ahu community.

For years the Oahu Civic Orchestra used to perform in the parish hall. Then in 2015, they switched to the renovated church and were hooked. The first concert they performed honored the 50th anniversary of our parish school and featured the Hearts Youth Performing Arts Choir. Another memorable concert they did was in June 2017 when four solo pianists performed individual pieces, then all together seated at one piano. Two of the soloists were our parishioners Robert Mondoy and Jordan Klein.

These musical groups have attracted fans who would normally never enter a Catholic church. So, our parish has gained an excellent opportunity to showcase our attractive and sacred environment and evangelize.

