



The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

Sermon: Year A – Fourth Sunday in Easter, May 7, 2017

The Reverend Canon R. K. “Moki” Hino,

Although I was born and raised in Micronesia, I have very deep roots in Hawai‘i, especially on Hawai‘i Island where my Nisei grandparents were born and raised on the Hamakua Coast. Coming “home” to Hawai‘i every year was a very big and much looked forward to ritual for me as a little boy.

I loved sitting in the back of my Uncle Mike’s jeep and driving down the steep road to Waipio Valley to go to the beach, pick fern shoots, swim in the rivers, and have picnic lunches with Hiilawe Falls gushing behind us. I also loved walking through Honokaa Town and going to the old Kaneshiro Store and buying li hing mui and rock salt plum, something we couldn't get back in my village in Guam.



But the biggest treat of all was Keanakolu, the plum farm that my Uncle Sai Higashi leased at the 6000-foot level on the slopes of Mauna Kea. Looking back on those summer trips, I have warm memories of the cabin, the furo where we used firewood to heat the water, climbing trees and picking plums, the outhouse where we used pages from old Sears catalogs as toilet paper, hunting for wild pigs at night, and waking up in the morning to see the mist rolling in and swirling around the rare and beautiful koa trees that grew in Keanakolu’s upland pastures.

The thing about Keanakolu was: it wasn't easy to get to. We always went and got permission from Mr. Rice, the manager at Kukaiiau Ranch, to take Uncle Sai’s jeep on the 4-wheel drive trails through the cow pastures—and the gates—the many, many gates. And guess whose job it was to open and close them all? Although looking back on it, I have to admit that it was fun to open the gates and then stand on them as they swung back closed again.

And in a way, opening and closing all those gates are what made the trip worth it, even though I used to have fantasies about flying in on a helicopter or being dropped down by parachute on the grounds of Keanakolu. But that’s not the way it was supposed to be. We had to take the trouble of getting permission, driving on the rough roads, and opening all the gates. And it was worth it, worth it for the jewel in the crown that we got after opening that very last gate—the jewel in the crown that was the beauty and the essence of Keanakolu, the cabin, the furo, the plum trees, the outhouse, the pigs, the mist, the koa trees, and the memories that will never fade away.

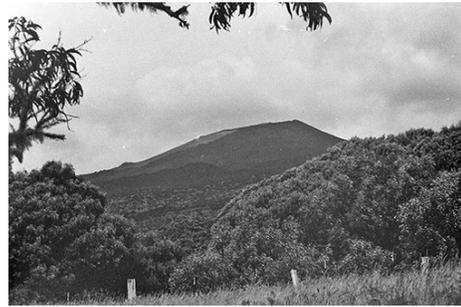
And so it seems to me that getting there any other way would’ve been cheating, mostly cheating myself out of experiencing the effort in doing what I had to do to get to the prize.

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Today's Gospel says: The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. And so, we have to go through the gate. That's what a good shepherd does. Shepherds in the Holy Land have small flocks and the shepherd doesn't drive his sheep from behind with dogs or horses or ATVs. He goes in front of the flock, faces any dangers (like wolves) and takes any risks first, and then leads the sheep—and the sheep follow his voice.

Leadership, Christian discipleship—those are serious enterprises. Every single one of us is called as a Christian to go through the gate. Every single one of us is called by God to play a role (whatever that role might be) in the church community, the Christian community, and the wider community, the wider community where our thoughts, our words, and our deeds, are informed by our courage to go through the gate.

Whether you're in the choir, whether you're on the Outreach Committee, whether you're on the Chapter, whether you're on the Altar Guild, whether you're a lector, whether you're a chalice bearer, whether you're a Sunday school teacher, whether you're called to uphold people in prayer, whether you're a deacon, whether you're a priest, whether you're a bishop, whoever we are; we're all called to serve and we go through the gate with a still, calm voice that others will follow so that they will also go through the gate as well.



And as we go through the gate it's incumbent upon us to ask, who and what God want us to be. What are our gifts? And how can we use those gifts to serve our church community and the community beyond the four walls of the church building?

Sure, I can come to church, keep the Commandments, say my prayers, take communion, and fulfill all my religious obligations. But we all know that's not enough. We all know that these things are supposed to empower us to do something more, something for those beyond the church's four walls, each of us making a contribution to the betterment of the whole—taking that fragmented, broken communion host and putting it back together again through our acts of kindness and goodwill, even if it's something as simple as smiling at a stranger once a day when we're walking down the street. We're called to strengthen our church community so that we can be strong enough to take risks and go out into the wider community. And it all starts here—with the prayers, with the community, with the sacraments, and with this Gospel message. But first, we have to follow the voice and go through the gate.

You know, I'm one of the luckiest people in the world. My family comes from Hawai'i, the most beautiful place on Earth. And my family has special places to go to, special places like Keanakolu on Hawai'i Island on the slopes of Mauna Kea.

To this day, whenever I'm sad or feeling stressed or feeling like I don't have what it takes to do what God calls me to do, to be who God calls me to be; I close my eyes and see myself opening that last gate at the end of that rough and rugged 4-wheel drive road and seeing the mist rolling into the upland pastures of Keanakolu on the slopes of Mauna Kea on Hawai'i Island back home. It's as if a voice is calling me to not get back in Uncle Sai's jeep, but to go through the gate, close it, and walk into the pastures of Keanakolu—my own private paradise

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where I feel the presence of God as a little boy. And I thank God for that. Because those experiences as a little boy made me the man that I've become today—one who, like you, is called to serve. That's what I heard in the presence of God after I walked through the gate at Keanakolu as a little island boy, a little island boy who longed to hear and who was called to listen.

And I thank God for the mist, the mountains, the memories, the gate, and the words:
Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. Amen



Photos by Moki Hino, 1970's