



The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

Sermon: Year A – Feast of the Holy Name – January 1, 2017

The Reverend Canon R. K. “Moki” Hino

This morning is a morning of change. It’s a new year. And it’s my first official day back at Saint Andrew’s Cathedral, and in a new role. We begin our time together with this passage from the Gospel of Luke and the giving of a name, that name being Jesus, he who saves; not saved, but *saves* – a verb in the present tense as we begin our new year and our new journey together.

The gospel passage says that Mary, “*pondered* these things in her heart,” ponder meaning to think about something carefully, especially before making a decision or reaching a conclusion, something that will lead to change—a change in thinking, a change in outlook, a change in life.

In years past heard the word “ponder” and always thought how calm and peaceful Mary must’ve been as she pondered these things in her heart. But as I think more about it, I wonder if that’s really true. We’re talking about a young girl of simple means from a small town who has been told that the Holy Spirit has caused her to be with child, and that that child is the Son of God. And as the shepherds come to pay homage, I wonder, “Is she calm and peaceful? Or is she simply stunned and scared out of her wits?” For her, things will definitely change. Mary’s life will never be the same again.

When you think about it, the scene is actually pretty simple – a mother and father and a newborn babe in an underground grotto in a crowded town where there’s no room at the inn. And what I wonder in all of this is, “How many people simply walk by the manger without even noticing it’s there?” The shepherds in the field make the trek, a rather short one in reality, they make the trek to the cave where Jesus is born. And like Mary, things for them will definitely change and their lives will never be the same again, because they noticed.

And maybe that’s the challenge in our Christian lives as agents of God’s mission and ministry – to change by seeing and recognizing the holy in things that are simple. It’s easy to see the holy in splendid basilicas and grand cathedrals, but do we see holiness in the ordinary when we’re going about our daily lives? That would be a huge change. To see the holy when we wake up in the morning with the gift of a new day. To see the holy when we go to the breakfast table and see the faces of our loved ones. To see the holy when we go off in the traffic to go to our jobs. Or to see the holy when we simply look in the mirror as we brush our teeth before we go to bed at night.

As many of you know, I left the Cathedral seven years ago in 2010 to go across the courtyard and serve as chaplain and fourth grade teacher at Saint Andrew’s Schools. But upon further reflection, I think the more significant passing of time is that I started at the Cathedral as Canon Pastor *ten* years ago, a full decade, in 2007. I was 42 years old back then. Now I’m 52.

A lot has changed for me. And it seems as if a lot has changed here for you, for us, as a cathedral community.

Year A – Feast of the Holy Name – January 1, 2017 cont’d.

There was no one on the staff when I walked into the office as Canon Administrator on Thursday morning who was here when I walked into the same office as Canon Pastor 10 years ago

People who are very dear to me and have also died – people like Auntie Pat Trask, Auntie Thelma Chun, Auntie Rosella Newell, Uncle Clifford Kobayashi, and Richard Gerage; just to name a few. There’ve also been numerous weddings, including the wedding of Paul and Kilani, and also the birth of Harry Kusunoki, whose parents’ wedding I performed right before I left Honolulu to go to Hilo. Some people have moved on. And there are many new faces here that I now get the chance to know.

I know what this cathedral looked like when I was 42. I know what it looks like now that I’m 52. But what will it look like when I’m 62? I don’t have an answer to that question yet, but I know it won’t look the way it looked 10 years ago and I know it won’t look the way it looks now. That’s just not the way things work in God’s world. Things don’t stay the same; they change.

And I’ve changed too. I’m not the same guy who was here as Canon Pastor. I’m ten years older. I’ve had two more jobs. I’ve run a church on my own. And now I’m back to run this one.

It’s interesting. I’ve spent the last 5 1/2 years near my family home on Hawai’i Island, just about 30 miles from Kilauea, the most active volcano in the world. And the thing that’s neat about Hawai’i Island is that the land constantly changes – to the point where we almost lost the town of Pahoa a couple of years back. As a young child coming from Guam to visit relatives on Hawai’i Island, I remember going to the Queen’s Bath & Kalapana Black Sand Beach. Now both are gone, but new land has been added, new land with small plants and young beaches, reminding us of the line in scripture that says, “In you we live and move and have our being.” (Acts 17:28) That’s the way it is in God’s world.

Things change. And we’re not called to stay the same. If we were, there would’ve been no need to send the Christ child to us, the Christ child who changed our world and made it a better place than it was before. But with change comes loss—loss of the old, loss of the familiar, loss of the things we’re used to—whether they’re good for us or not.

Loss, it seems, is part of the creative process, almost as if it’s God’s will. And while it’s right and good to grieve our losses, I don’t think that we’re called to wallow in them; at least not if we worship the one who’s Holy Name is Jesus, bearing in mind that we are people of the Resurrection who set our hearts on the horizon of promise and belief in the hope of good things to come, and the changes that come along with those good things.

But for now, at this new beginning, for now, we ponder these things in *our* hearts as we strive to find the holy in the ordinary and the simple, confident in our prayers, confident in our sacraments, confident in each other, confident in the Holy Name of Jesus, the one who saves.