



## The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

### Sermon: Year C – Fifth Sunday after Epiphany – Feb. 10, 2019, 8:00: King Kamehameha IV

Every morning when I walk these Cathedral grounds, I recall how many years ago Queen Emma and King Kamehameha IV decided to forego the royal pomp and circumstance that was their due as Hawaiian royalty. I recall how instead they walked through the streets of Honolulu and knocked on doors of homes and businesses after a smallpox epidemic hit the city. They held pencils and notebooks in their hands and solicited funds for a hospital. It was a humble act. They made a difference. They reached out to God's people and for God's people. And most of all, they gave life to the words of Jesus:

*From now on you will be catching people.*

And to this day, every time I'm in the cathedral, I marvel at its light brown sandstone columns and walls. I'm in awe of the beautiful stain glass windows—especially when the sunshine hits them and projects their colors onto the walls and floors as if God is playing with watercolors and pastels.

And every time I'm in the cathedral, I fix my eyes upon the sandstone font and I take in its beautiful relief carvings depicting the Baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan.

And, finally, when I look upon the kahili, the cylindrical arrangements of feathers that are standard bearers of Hawaiian royalty, I know that I'm in a special building and that I'm in a special place.

This is the Cathedral. This is the church. I make both these statements with great confidence and I make both these statements with great pride. This is the church. This is my church. And then I hear the words from this morning's Gospel:

*From now on you will be catching people.*

Perhaps I'm off the mark. After all, what is the church?

I have a seminary classmate who is rector of a small parish in the State of Michigan. The building is beautiful, it's modern, the picture window behind the altar looks out over a peaceful and charming lake—and it cost members of the parish one point five million dollars to build—one point five million dollars whose loan they could not repay, because several years ago the economy in Michigan took a downward turn. As we gather in Honolulu, Hawai'i to worship this morning, we should know that the bank in Michigan prevailed. They foreclosed on the building and the parish had to rent space from The Seventh Day Adventists.

The people in the parish are anxious. But my classmate reassures them over and over again saying, "We may have lost the building, but we will never lose the church. The church is not the building. The church is the people of God who reach out to the people of God." The people of God—the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, the prisoner, the people of King Kamehameha the Fourth, the people that he understood Jesus called him to "go and catch".

*"Our beloved Church regards her children as having bodies as well as souls to be cared for, and sanctions the consecration of these and all that is beautiful in nature and art to the service of God." . . . - Queen Emma.*

## Epiphany 5 – February 10, 2019, 8:00 am, cont'd.

When we baptize new Christians, we reaffirm the promises we made when we went into the life-giving waters ourselves, proclaiming that we will seek and serve Christ in all persons and that we will respect the dignity of every human being. We are all the people of God and we are all the church, every last one of us—you, me, the people in my friend's parish in Michigan, the people who live on our streets and come into this building seeking sanctuary—they are also the church, they are also the people of God, they are also the body of Christ. And we remember the words of Jesus:

*From now on you will be catching people.*

Several years ago, I sat in a classroom at Seabury Hall in Upcountry Maui and listened to Keali'i Reichel as he explained the concept of 'ohana to the faculty and staff. We all know that, loosely translated, 'ohana is the Hawaiian word for family. But Keali'i explained that the deeper meaning of 'ohana speaks to the place and the source from which we spring forth. That's why even though I was born and raised in Guam, I can say that I'm from Honoka'a. That's the place from which I sprang forth from my grandparents' and great-grandparents' roots.

I think that the King would call us to remember that as a Christian family, therefore, our 'ohana, the source from which we spring forth, is Jesus Christ. We spring forth from Jesus Christ who is born of Mary in a manger in Bethlehem. We spring forth from Jesus Christ who teaches elders in the temple at the age of twelve. We spring forth from Jesus Christ who is tempted in the desert. We spring forth from Jesus Christ who is transfigured before our eyes. We spring forth from Jesus Christ who enters Jerusalem on a donkey. We spring forth from Jesus Christ who overturns the tables of the moneychangers in the temple. We spring forth from Jesus Christ who is arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. We spring forth from Jesus Christ who dies on the cross. We spring forth from Jesus Christ who rises victorious from the grave.

We spring forth from Jesus Christ who is alive and in our midst—at our baptism, in our Eucharist, and in the countenance on the faces of not only Queen Emma, King Kamehameha the Fourth and their people, but of all people, all the people of God, especially the sick, the friendless, and the needy. We spring forth from Jesus Christ who proclaims:

*From now on you will be catching people.*

The devotees who come to worship here every Sunday; the people who live in the streets of downtown Honolulu and come here seeking sanctuary; the uncle at Straub whom I gave last rites to last week; the Japanese, the Filipino, the Chinese, the Portuguese, and the Korean plantation worker who built these islands; the tourist who comes from afar and keeps our economy going; the child at St. Andrew's School who comes to worship here every week at chapel. You. Me. We are the people of God. And through our baptism, we are one with Christ. The King would have us remember this and this is why we honor him today: he points us to Christ.

So, on this beautiful Hawaiian Sunday morning as we gather to honor King Kamehameha the Fourth and the way he lived into the call to catch people and he would have us remember Christ and that we are one with Him and his people. As we feel the inspiring wind blow through these windows and through these doors, we remember Christ and that we are one with Him and his people; as we take in the stirring aroma from the calm ocean spray, we remember Christ and that we are one with Him and his people; as we stand beneath the verdant and majestic mountains that shelter us from the storm, we remember Christ and that we are one with Him and his people; as we bask in the tropical sun, we remember Christ and that we are one with Him and his people; as we

**Epiphany 5 – February 10, 2019, 8:00 am, cont'd.**

take replenishment in the nurturing rains that fall from the clouds, we remember Christ and that we are one with Him and his people.

In the midst of the beauty that surrounds us, we remember our baptism, we remember the bread and the wine, we remember King Kamehameha IV, we remember the church, we remember the people of God, and we remember Christ. We remember Christ and we remember that we are one with Him and his people at our baptism, through our Eucharist, and in our lives.

And in gratitude for all of that, I invite you to come to this table. I invite you to come to this table for spiritual nourishment and I invite you to come to this table for spiritual food. Then I charge each and every one of us—I charge us to go forth from this building to honor the name of the King—to go forth from this building as the church; not the building, but the body of Christ, the living temple—replenished, revitalized, restored, renewed, and ready—I charge us to go forth from this building as the church, to go out into the world and to minister to the people of God who wait for us to live into the words and make them come true:

*From now on you will be catching people.*

*Amen.*