

Tuesday, January 27, 2009

Dear Brother Stephen,

I am writing this letter to express my deep gratitude and sincere appreciation for having had the privilege of participating in the 125th anniversary celebration of Marianists in my home state of Hawai'i. Although brief, the weekend offered many positive and inspiring experiences that, upon its conclusion, I could not help but feel truly blessed to be a professed member of the Society of Mary from Hawai'i and how important it was for me to be present at this event.

I will cherish many valuable memories from these past few days: the informal interactions with other Hawai'i-born Marianists throughout the weekend; assisting with the memorial prayer service at Diamond Head; watching the premier of a documentary film that recounts the history of Marianist presence in my home state; and witnessing the number of laity making and renewing their commitments as members of the Marianist Family.

However, the one priceless moment which truly stood out from among those mentioned above was when we—all 12 Hawai'i-born living Marianist religious—stood together listening to your message of appreciation and gratitude. I was deeply moved by the way you expressed your thoughts and the words that you chose, acknowledging mistakes of the past and learning from them as we move into the future.

Growing up in Hawai'i, I learned to cherish the richness of Hawaiian tradition, culture and spirituality; I believe that my affinity for Hawaiian spirituality helped lead me toward taking my first steps in becoming a professed member of the Society of Mary. During my first few years in formation, I learned much about our Marianist history, charism and way of life—and, to this day, maintain that the core values of Hawaiian spirituality and our own Marianist charism are one and the same, only using different labels to identify the shared values.

Listening to the words you spoke that night meant so much to me: not only did I feel affirmed in my approach to living religious life as a Hawai'i-born Marianist, but also offered me the encouragement to continue sharing the richness of Hawaiian culture—which truly is Marianist in nature—to our world.

In my brief life as a professed religious, I never have felt any more pride in being “Hawaiian and Marianist” than during that moment. And for that, I am eternally grateful.

*‘O wau me ka ha‘aha‘a* (humbly yours),

Dennis R. Bautista, S.M.

January 28, 2009

St. Thomas Aquinas, priest, doctor

Dear Brother Glodek,

I write to you today to share with you my deepest gratitude and sincerest appreciation for having being part of this past weekends celebration, commemorating more than 125 years of our Marianist presence in the Hawai'ian islands, which I call home. Though my time spent at home this past weekend was short, it proved to be a very meaningful and blessed experience, especially during these formative years as a young Marianist.

There were several highlights that made the experience very memorable. Being able to lead our Marianist Family in prayer, at the Diamond Head Memorial cemetery in my native tongue was both an honor and a privilege. Many approached Dennis Bautista and I, thanking us for what we had done, I on the other hand am appreciative for those brothers who came before us, such as Franklin Pao, who laid the ground work and raised the awareness of many our brothers of the richness of our Hawai'ian spirituality.

Witnessing the members of the Lay Marianist family make and renew their commitments; watching the documentary film of the Marianist history in Hawai'i and how it is growing – were for me signs of vitality that our Marianist charism continues to thrive in the islands.

The most memorable experience, one that has touched my heart in a very special and profound way, was when all 12 Hawai'i-born Marianists were on stage listening to your words of gratitude and appreciation. Listening to your heartfelt words and how you expressed the human short comings and mistakes of the past, was very much a visible sign that we are definitely moving in the right direction.

As a Marianist with Hawai'ian ancestry, these past years has been one of trying to reclaim the rich cultural heritage that I have now come to believe that can enrich our Marianist Family and our Church. Its hard not too see that this Hawai'ian spirituality and our Marianist charism are the same but which we have come to identify with different names and labels.

Listening to you and to what you spoke of, was very affirming. I felt affirmed in how I am living my life as a Marianist and that the Hawai'ian spirituality I espouse is also affirmed. At that moment on the stage, I was so proud to call myself a Marianist, but not just any Marianist, a Hawai'ian Marianist. As I left the islands to return to my community, I felt encouraged to continue to share my Hawai'ian culture and spirituality – which are very Marianist – for the life of my community, the Church, and the world.

May God bless my feeble efforts toward holiness, and may Mary our mother continue to walk with us in this great adventure that we call life.

*Me ke aloha pumehana* (with warm aloha),

Brandon Alana