

Chaminade star student, professor, doctor, now Marianist

By Patrick Downes
Hawaii Catholic Herald

Dennis Bautista strode down the corridors of Chaminade University of Honolulu on July 19 with the ease of a student and the self-assuredness of a faculty member. It was only natural; the Ewa Beach native has been both. This time, however, he was walking through the campus as a Marianist.

The Campbell High School grad made his first profession as a Marianist Brother two months ago in Dayton, Ohio. He was back in Hawaii for a vacation with his parents before he takes on a

year's assignment at St. Mary's University, a Marianist institution in San Antonio, Texas.

In the breezy living room of one of the newer Marianist residences on the upper level of the Chaminade campus, Brother Bautista, 33, talked to the Hawaii Catholic Herald about his passage through young adulthood to the religious life.

With his slender athletic build and short cropped black hair, he could pass as a student, though he has a PhD and acquired his first professorship a full decade ago. Dressed in a crisp aloha shirt, a silver Marianist cross hanging around his neck, he was

animated and cheery.

Brother Bautista is your typical Ewa Beach product: Kaimiloa Elementary. Ilima Intermediate. Campbell. His father, Domingo, retired from a U.S. Navy career in 1984 and now works as a chef at Kahi Mohala. His mother, Elisa (Ramos), is a trainer director at Keiki Corner Child Development at Iroquois Point. Both are Philippine immigrants.

Ask if he has any siblings and the simple answer would be yes. However, Bautista can't avoid a simple answer to that question.

Brother Bautista likes to consider his sister Edna his "twin," even though she was born five

years ahead of him. Like identical twins, they have done many things alike and when they have not, he said, they fill in each other's gaps.

Edna went to Marianist-run Chaminade University graduating magna cum laude in 1989 with the outstanding graduate and outstanding communications graduate awards. She returned to campus two years later, master's degree in hand, to serve as an adjunct professor in communications.

Dennis completed Chaminade summa cum laude in 1994, also with the outstanding communication graduate award, and delivered the commencement address. He spent the next two years earning his master's, came back and took over his sister's position. That summer, his sister married Rick Parkinson in Chaminade's Mystical Rose Oratory.

Dennis became a full-time communications professor at Chaminade in 2000, a year before Edna was hired to head his department and serve as his boss. Both left Chaminade in 2002, he to complete a doctorate in communications from Washington State University. She already had one from Oklahoma State and was moving to a position on the mainland.

During and beyond his years at Chaminade, Bautista had bumped up against the question of a Marianist vocation. In college, Bautista brushed it off, assuming himself to spiritually "immature" for such a calling.

However, in 1999 he accepted an invitation by Marianist Brother Dennis Schmidt to a "no

strings attached" retreat at the Marianist headquarters in Cupertino. Father Allen DeLong, who this year left his post as president of St. Louis School, was the retreat director.

The retreat got Bautista thinking, not specifically of a religious vocation, but about his "relationship with God."

"Something all Catholics need to think about," he realized.

Teaching at Chaminade the next couple of years kept him in touch with the Marianists. From them he had an open invitation — to casual conversation, to dinner, to a one-year live-in "aspirancy" program.

The decision to commit to one year as an aspirant — one who is considering the Marianist life — was becoming less and less difficult the more Bautista kept in contact with the community. His attitude changed from "I think I can do this" to "I WANT to do this."

So after completing his doctorate he signed up. His first year living with the Marianists, 2003-2004, was at St. Mary's in San Antonio. He worked in the university's public relations office.

"St. Mary's was so nice," he said. "I enjoyed the year very much. It was a good year of growth."

Bautista decided he would take the next step. He joined the Marianist novitiate in Dayton in 2004. After the requisite two years as a novice, he made his final vows this year on May 20, his birthday, with three others.

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St. Patrick School

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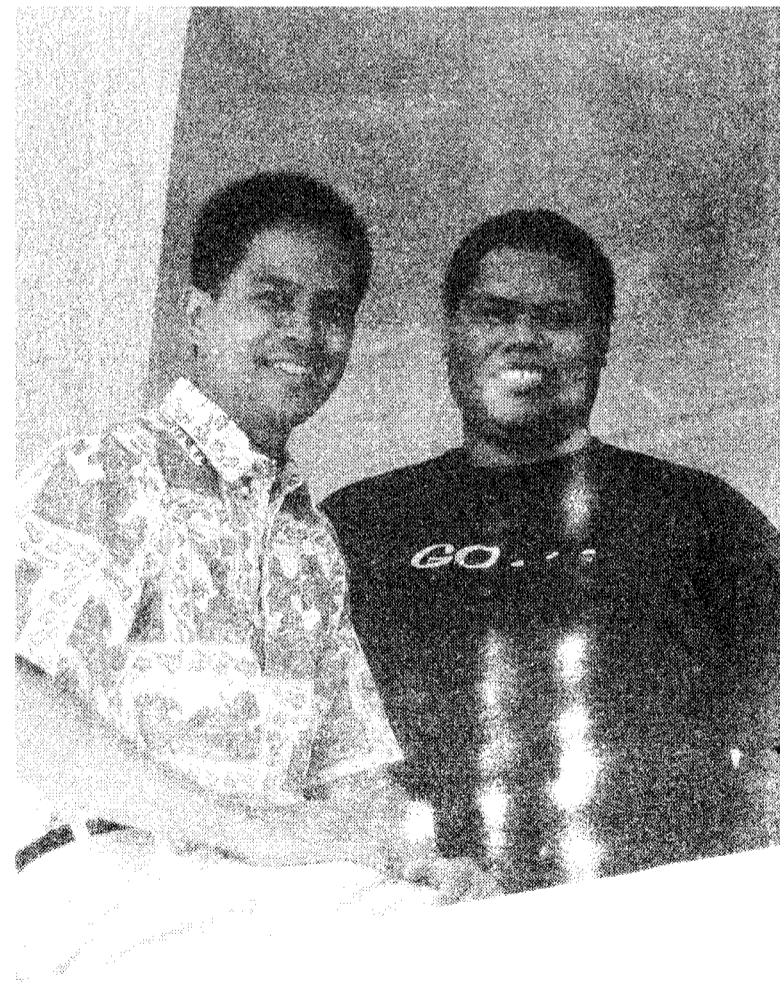
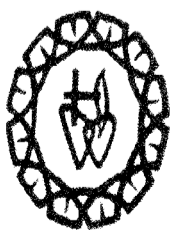
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TWO STAGES OF MARIANIST: Marianist Brother Dennis Bautista, left, and Marianist aspirant Brandon Alana meet in an archway of Freitas Hall on the campus of Chaminade University of Honolulu, from which both graduated. Alana is a 24-year-old Samoan-Hawaiian, the oldest of three sons, born in Aiea and raised in Samoa. He graduated from Chaminade in 2004 with a bachelor's degree in religious studies and will spend the next year living with the Marianist community at St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas, doing campus ministry work.

Chaminade graduate, professor, doctor, now Marianist Brother

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Brother Bautista considers himself and the Marianists a good fit. Education is one of the Marianists' primary charisms — they have three universities in the United States — and he has "always wanted to teach."

Ironically, his life so far as a Marianist has kept him out of the classroom, using his practical talents in communications, media and graphic design for the benefit of his new religious community.

Another of his gifts is musical. He has compressed five years of childhood piano lessons into the portability of an eight-string ukulele, which he brings to community prayer and other situations calling for the spark of music.

This coming school year at St. Mary's he will be teaching again — part time — communication courses. He will also be taking classes himself — in theology.

"While I am going back to a career I had before, it doesn't matter how I'm serving," he said.

The question is rather, "How can I carry out the Marianist gift to others regardless of what I do?"

The Marianist mission, he said, is "Mary's mission to bring Jesus to others. The goal for a brother is to lead your brother and sister to heaven."

"This particular 'kulia' is

Right, the Bautistas pose for a family photo at Dennis' first profession of vows, May 20, in Dayton, Ohio. From left, Dennis' mother Elisa, Dennis, his father Domingo, his sister Edna, and Edna's husband Rick Parkinson.

bringing Jesus to students," he said, even if the course subject is "communications."

Will priesthood eventually be a part of this service? Bautista thinks not. When some Marianist brothers become priests, it is in the context of service, not advancement, he explained. Brothers and priests are equals in the Marianist order. Bautista feels no call to priesthood — not at this time.

Brother Bautista is not even looking ahead to permanent vows which normally take place after three years of temporary professions. For the present, he is answering the religious call one year at a time. Nevertheless, each new year only strengthens his love for the Marianist life.

"Taking it a year at a time, I have been blessed," the new Marianist said. "I have developed lasting friendships. I have learned a lot about myself."

"And I feel I don't really belong here in Hawaii anymore," he said. "I have a home in San Antonio. Home for me now is the Marianists."



SAINT MICHAEL'S SCHOOL

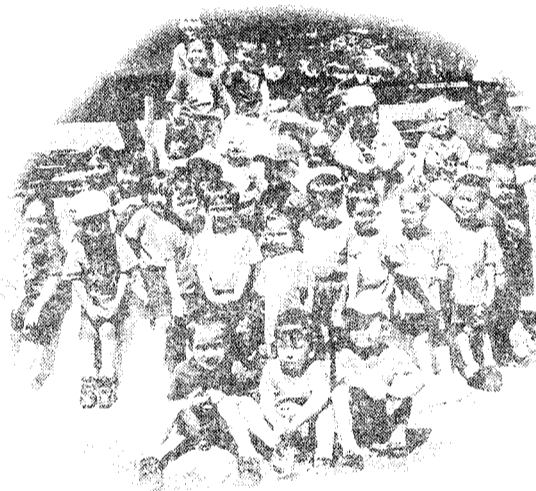


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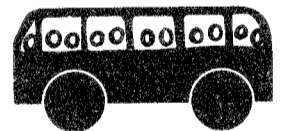
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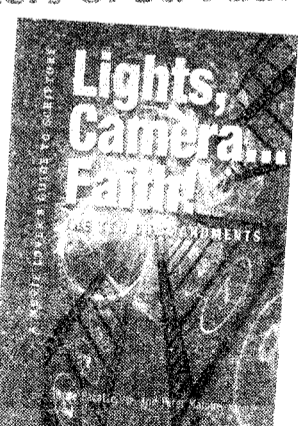


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