

Christ The King Church Celebrates Diamond Anniversary

By Lucy Peros

Christ The King Church has been a part of our Maui Community for the past 75 years. Many of us received the sacraments at Christ The King Church. On November 25, 2007, we will be celebrating its Diamond Anniversary with a mass at 10:00 a.m. with Bishop Larry Silva officiating and a luncheon and program to follow at the parish hall. Everyone is invited. The chosen theme of the celebration is, A Diamond Celebration: A Journey of Hope ... A Journey of Growth...

The following history of Christ The King Church is being shared by our Pastor, Father Efren Tomas.

History of Christ the King Parish

Christ The King Parish began in the 1880's as a mission outpost of the then flourishing Holy Family Parish in Puunene. Kahului was then an unimportant town consisting of only a few houses. Even with the establishment of the Kahului Railroad company in 1888, the town failed to grow. It was so small that with the outbreak of bubonic plague in 1900, much of the town was burned to the ground in an effort to wipe out the pests causing the disease.

It has been estimated that up until 1924 there were probably no more than 60 Catholics living in Kahului. But, because of the valuable boat harbor and the expansion of the Hawaiian Commercial and Sugar Company (HC&S), it became obvious that Kahului would become an important city with many residents. It was then that Mrs. Anne Enomoto approached Mr. Frank Baldwin, manager of the Kahului Railroad Company and HC&S, requested a land on which to build a church.

Mr. Baldwin offered Father Bartholomew Bax, SS.CC, who was then the pastor of Holy Family Church in Puunene, a piece of beach front property near the Kahului Harbor (near Maui Seaside Hotel and former Hukilau Hotel). Because Father Bax was from Holland, the land of dikes, he was worried about a tidal wave. He suggested that the church be located further inland. His request was granted in the summer of 1931 when for \$1.00 (and the clause that the land could not be sold) a piece of land was

given along the main highway for the establishment of a Catholic Church in Kahului.

The plantation sent men and equipments to level the lot, and construction began in 1932. The church built in the style of a California mission, was blessed by Bishop Stephen Alancastre on the feast of Christ the King, October 30, 1932. The cost of the church was \$18,000 and since tremendous growth was foreseen for Kahului, the small church was built in such a way that could easily be expanded. Two sides and the back were laid in solid concrete, but the front of the church was made of plaster designed to be broken down when the time came to enlarge the church.

Christ the King remained a mission outpost until Father Evarist Gielen, SS.CC. was named as Kahului's first pastor in 1942. A small rectory was built to accommodate the priest. Father Gielen was able to pursue his hobby as a painter, first in the church in Spreckelsville and then in Christ the King. It was in the Kahului church that Father Gielen painted a bigger-than-life picture of Christ the King above the altar that remained on the church until it was enlarged in 1980.

Father Eugene Rakels succeeded Father Gielen but died in 1947 after serving Christ the King for one year. With the advent of Kahului's "Dream City", Father Anthony O'Brien purchased 4 ½ acres of land from Alexander & Baldwin for \$16,000.00 on which to build a school. It was Father Joseph Putman, however, who was able to get the school built. The first wing was built in 1958. The school was staffed by the sisters of St. Joseph of Corondolet. Father Putman asked the bishop for help, but there were no priests available. So, in 1960, Father Putman went to Belgium and returned with his twin brother Father Andrew Putman.

The convent was brought over from Paia for the sisters in 1961, the same year as the hall, which is used as a kindergarten and library. It was brought from Spreckelsville. Today Christ the King School has a pre-school, Kindergarten to six grades. It is staffed by lay administrators, faculty and Sisters of St. Joseph of Corondolet. Parents volunteer to share their time and talent with the community in various capacities.

By 1966, the parish had 700 Catholic Families with approximately 3,500 parishioners. It was at this time that Father Putman bought the acre of land between Christ the King and the Salvation Army Center for \$45,000.00

Father Ernest Claes was appointed Pastor of Christ the King parish in 1967. He built the new rectory for \$45,850.00 in 1969. Father Felix Vanderbroek, who succeeded Father Claes, started the drive for the much needed expansion of Christ the King. His task was finished by Father Joseph Hendricks who took over the duties as a pastor in September 1979.

The new Christ the King Church, enlarged in the shape of a cross, was blessed by Bishop John J. Scanlan on April 12, 1981. The renovation of the church cost the parish \$457,568.00

On January 20, 1989, the dedicated service of the Sacred Heart Fathers came to a close with Father Hendrick's departure. A diocesan priest, Father Gary Colton took over, from 1989 to 1995. Father Charles Oyabu was assigned Pastor of Christ the King Parish from 1995 until 1997.

In June 1997, Father William Shannon was appointed Administrator and later on as pastor of Christ the King Parish until June 30, 2004. On July 1, 2004, Christ the King Parish was given to the care of the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette. Fr. Efren A. Tomas, MS, a member of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette in the Philippines, was appointed Administrator and later on as Pastor. He is ably assisted by Fr. Wilfredo Iminga, MS. Fr. Ronaldo Guzman, MS, was assigned as Associate Pastor of Christ the King Parish on January 1, 2007.

From Father Bax and 60 Catholics in a mission outpost 75 years earlier, Christ the King has grown and expanded to become the parish it is now. The dream of Father Bax has come true. On this, diamond anniversary, we can truly say that Christ the King is indeed a visible sign of the growth in both number and the fervor of the Catholics in Kahului.