

Father Christopher Patrick Keahi, Congregation of the Sacred Hearts: The privilege of working for God

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VIRIDITAS: SOUL GREENING

Interviewed by Sister Malia Dominica Wong, OP
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God has given me the energy by which I can continue to do his work on earth. He has allowed me the privilege of continuing my ministry for his sake.

When I was very small, my parents divorced. I was only three years old then. My brother, sister and I were sent out to live in different foster homes. No one wanted to take all three of us together. So we grew up more like cousins until our adult lives.

I grew up in seven foster families. Every two years, I had to move to a new one. All that movement and adjustment hardened me and helped me to overcome all of the obstacles I encountered. For example, it is very difficult to grow up, make friends and then have to leave them. So, that is why I have friends everywhere and am friends to everyone, but don't have any really close friends.

I believe God was preparing me for something. His graces have been all I need. I never went to a Catholic school; I never studied the faith. But when I was a student at Kaimuki High, there was an optional class on First Fridays during our last period of the day that was offered. I took the class because there were no studies involved and I thought I could then sleep and waste time.

But one day, the priest who was giving the class, Father Brendan Furtado, said to me, "You know, I think you have a vocation." Father Furtado was a Sacred Hearts priest from St. Patrick's church. I asked, "What is a vocation?" He continued, "I think you are being called to the priesthood." I looked at him with surprise and responded, "You have got to be kidding. Me? Forget it." But, guess what, God works through mysterious ways. God has given me the privilege of working in his name.

I believe God's graces kept me from all dangers and harms and kept me on the straight and narrow way. I am so happy, so glad that when anyone calls upon me for help, I never refuse. When I was a police chaplain ministering to officers who needed help, along with the general public, I realized that many times people get into difficulties because no one cares for them. The same goes for the homeless I minister to today. We need to care.

At 83 years of age, I continue to thank God every single day whether it be in celebrating Mass either in private, public or at a military chapel. During this time of pandemic, I ask you to place your trust in God. God will help you, I know that. Have at least faith that all things will go better, and it will. Everyday is a new day. Look forward to a better tomorrow.

Father Christopher Patrick Keahi was born in Honolulu and is a priest of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. He is 63 years professed and 55 years ordained. In 1978, the Maui County Council passed a congratulatory resolution for his outstanding service to St. Joseph Church and School and the Makawao community. He continues to be active in his retirement, serving wherever the need is from St. Patrick Monastery in Kaimuki where he resides.