

U.S. PROVINCE OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE SACRED HEARTS OF JESUS AND MARY

HEARTS ON FIRE

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"FROM THIS CONSECRATION TO THE SACRED HEARTS OF JESUS AND MARY, IS TO CONTEMPLATE, LIVE AND ANNOUNCE THE LOVE OF GOD MADE FLESH IN THE HEART OF JESUS."



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MARY'S MERCY CENTER CHRISTMAS PARTY

PRAYER AND MANIFESTING GOD'S LOVE

BY FR. LANE AKIONA, PROVINCIAL
U.S. PROVINCE OF SACRED HEARTS OF JESUS
AND MARY

“THE CONSECRATION TO THE SACRED HEARTS IS
THE FOUNDATION OF OUR INSTITUTE” B.P.

The mission of this consecration is to contemplate, live, and announce to the world God's Love which was made flesh in Jesus. So how do we fulfill this mission at this time and place? First and foremost, we must be people of genuine prayer, which is the source of faith. As we mature in prayer, so too we must live out in ACTION what the Spirit directs us towards. Which is to do as Jesus did, to love unconditionally each person we encounter. Our prayer should always be the source that inspires us to do for others, especially those in greatest need—the poor, the marginalized, the broken, the forgotten, and those who have no hope. May our consecration of the hearts of Jesus and Mary allow us to live the dynamism of Jesus' love in our world with courage and perseverance. To the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Honor and Glory.



PROFESSION OF VOWS TO THE SACRED HEARTS OF JESUS AND MARY

BY FR. BILL GURAL, SS.CC.

At the 5 pm Mass Jan. 31, 2026, at the Holy Name of Mary parish in San Dimas, California, five young men from the Pacific professed temporary vows to the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Provincial Superior of the US, Fr. Lane Akiona ss.cc. received the vows of Iowani Tuiviani and Antonio Damuni Masilekaleka from Fiji, Mathieu Vaitulukina from the islands of Wallis and Futuna, and Mark Makasini and Patelesio To'oa from the Kingdom of Tonga.



LEFT TO RIGHT: BR. ANTONIO, BR. PATELESIO, BR. MATHIEU, BR. MARK, AND BR. IOWANE

"There was a large turn out of family and friends from the Fijian Catholic Communities of San Francisco, Santa Rosa and Los Angeles present to offer their support and well wishes".

Their novice master, Fr. Semisi Pulotu ss.cc. observed that "as much as I helped to form them, they also helped to form me into a better person"

The five young men will return to Fiji in the next few weeks to continue their philosophy studies at the Pacific Regional Seminary," commented John Pickering, Director of Communications for the Archdiocese of Fiji, and doctoral candidate in Catholic education.

Fr. Lane spoke these beautiful from our Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary rite of profession, reminding us SS.CC. of our consecration and mission:

"There is a wealth of history of brothers and sisters, who came to those wonderful islands to evangelize. You are the inheritor of our tradition. maintain yourselves in the service of the gospel". And now are coming full circle, with vocations coming from the Pacific- where we were first sent to preach the gospel.

"May your own attitude, choices, and task that led Jesus to the point of having his heart trans pierced on the cross; may you be sustained by the intercession of the Virgin Mary, St. Damien, Blessed Eustaquio, and the whole church always maintain yourselves in the service of the gospel."

"Remember: above all else, we preach love." The Tongan choir sang "Here I am, Lord" (in Tongan) with great gusto and joy as the first profession liturgy was concluding. Also relative of Br. Mathieu ventured from France and Wallis and Futuna to participate in the profession of vows rite and liturgy.

Fr. Chris Santangelo, the pastor of Holy Name of Mary Church, spoke a few words of gratitude, concluding with the call and response: "God is good... all the time. All the time... God is good";. Indeed how great is our God!



PROCLAIMING GOD'S LOVE...THROUGH PARISH LIFE

BY BR. MARC ROQUE, SS.CC.



For over a year now, the Sacred Hearts Brothers in Formation in Fiji have been volunteering their time serving the people of St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Tamavua. As one of those brothers, I have seen how a Parish can truly be a conduit for God's love. Whenever I go to our Parish in Tamavua and talk with our parishioners, the people's desire of learning more about God and our faith is very much palpable. Therefore, it our duty as Sons of the Sacred Hearts to proclaim God's love through our work in Parish life.

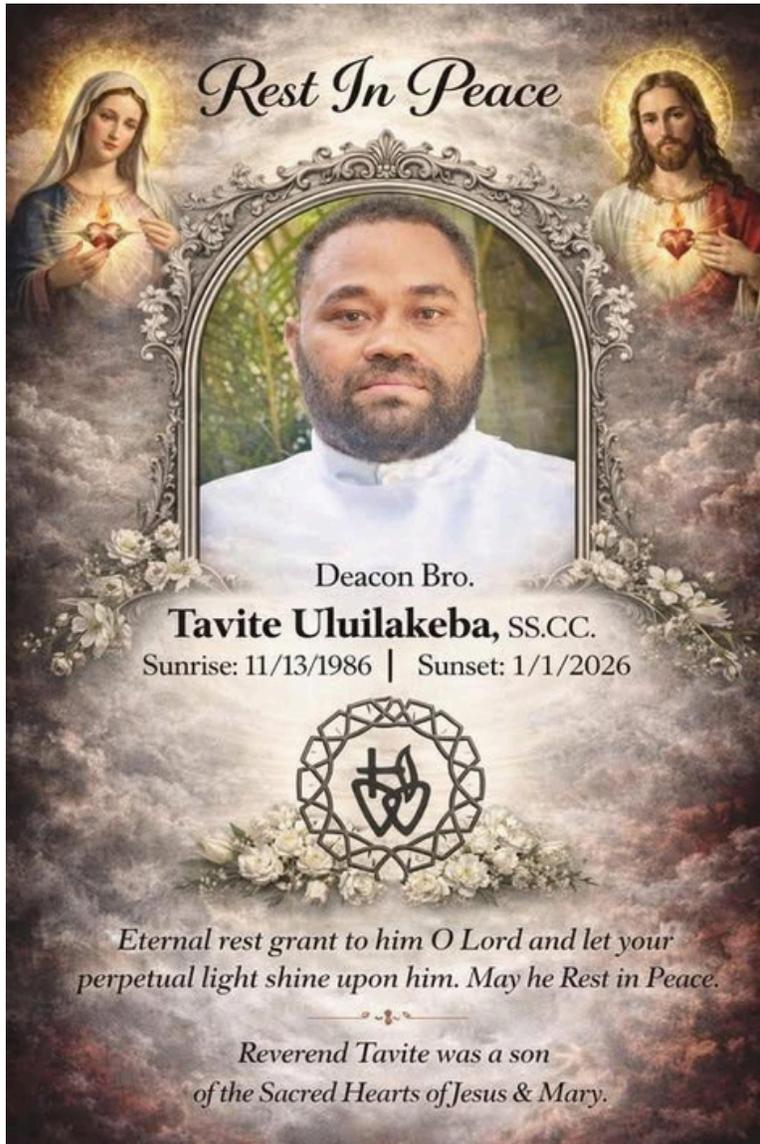
I always like to reflect on the fact that a parish becomes a manifestation of God's extravagant love - a community that mirrors the Father's relentless pursuit of the lost, the compassionate embrace of the prodigal, and the life-transforming power of the risen Christ. The Parish proclaiming God's love is not easy, nor can it be quickly or painlessly realized. It requires a willingness to abandon our practices of "doing church as usual" and to embrace the sacrificial, Spirit-empowered work of evangelization. It requires a renewed commitment to prayer, a relentless focus on relationships, and a leadership model rooted in empowerment and collaboration.



Therefore, I would like to admit that we are doing just that here in Fiji. My brothers are very much active in every aspect of the life of the Parish. From Faith Formation Classes, Marriage Encounter, Evangelization, Youth Groups, visiting Small Christian Communities, and so much more. It is our intent that by being present and dedicating our time to these ministries, that the rewards will not only be in terms of parish growth, but more importantly - in the deeper, abiding fruit of lives transformed by the Gospel and a community that radiates the beauty of holiness to a world in desperate need of encountering the love of God.

EULOGY FOR DEACON BRO. TAVITE ULUILAKEBA, SS.CC.

BY BR. MARC S. ROQUE, SS.CC.



As for me, not only did I lose a brother but I lost someone who always made sure I was doing okay. Brother Te and I are Novitiate Brothers; we were in the 2021 Novitiate Class in California and throughout that year I got to know Brother Te very well. He not only shared his life with me, but also the painful parts and memories as well. In one of my conversations with him, I remember Brother Te telling me, "I am a broken human being, but also beloved by God." Te would never be shy to show and share his brokenness with others, he felt that it was our duty as religious brothers, to share our brokenness with others - so that we can remind one another that we are all on the same journey.

Brother Te will forever be remembered, especially by the Brothers here in Fiji. Father Johnathan Hurrell, ss.cc., Head of Formation in Fiji, says that Brother Te was, "A young missionary who believed in God's love and lived that love with God's holy people. He is our first missionary who is buried in the new missions of the South Pacific [Fiji]. We are heart broken with his loss and grateful to God for his witness as a Son of the Sacred Hearts." In the end, I personally would like to continue to give thanks to God and to our Community for allowing Tavite to be a part of our SSCC family. May our brother's vibrant personality and love of life continue to be an encouragement for us all to not only accept our brokenness, but to share it as well.

For all of us Sacred Hearts Brothers, especially us here in Fiji, we started off the New Year with great pain and sorrowful hearts. In the early hours of January 1st, 2026, our Reverend Deacon, Brother Tavite "Te" Baleinagasau Uluilakeba, was called back to the Lord's House. It is tough to accept the fact that he is gone and no longer journeying with us in this world, but we are rest assured that he is in a better place. Throughout the years, especially when he was with the community, Brother Te would selflessly give himself to the service of others and would always have time to listen to those who just wanted to talk. Brother Te had the gift of wanting to be present and being a comforting presence to those going through so much.



LIVE...THE LOVE

BY FR. DAVID LUPO,SS.CC.

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The Christmas Pageant and Vigil Mass are complete, and the congregation quietly moves towards the doors, leaving the semi-dark worship space, advancing into the cold and dark outside. I stand at the bottom of the steps, greeting the people streaming towards me. *"Boas Festas"* I say to one person, *"Merry Christmas"* to a second, and *"Feliz Natal"* to a third. The atmosphere is jubilant and bright. The departing members of Our Lady of the Assumption Parish are smiling and responsive. And I have just exhausted my small grasp of seasonal Portuguese.

This was a blessed evening, watching the English-speaking and Portuguese-speaking communities working together to put on an incredible rendition of the biblical Christmas story. The drama comes complete with dialogue. Herod says to the visiting Magi, "Hey, you, I'm the only king around here." It is splendidly fashioned and directed by Sr. Marianna Sylvester, RSM. and Dorothy Lopes. The near-full church responds with emotion.

This parish community in New Bedford, Massachusetts, forms the First Catholic Church in United States of America for the Cape Verdean people. The first OLOA (common self-reference) was built in 1905, on Water Street. But In 1954, a hurricane blew through the city and badly damaged the structure by flooding. Parishioners waded through the waters to save what they could. In 1957, a newer church building was erected on South Sixth Street, farther up from the Acushnet River, and has been home to the community ever since.

Nearly everyone at OLOA has their roots in Cape Verde, nine small islands that form a backwards "C" and lie to the west of the African nation of Senegal. Here in the States, in the 1800's, Cape Verdeans took to whaling in the north and south Pacific Ocean, in the spirit of Moby Dick, and became excellent sailors. As the whaling industry faded, they went to cotton mills and farms in the area, and later found work in the cranberry industry.

I have been here a little over three years. It has been a good placement for ministry, and the most challenging. Language, on the one hand, has brought on the challenge. Yet language has not been a factor in the celebration of the Eucharist on Sunday. Following the 9 am Mass in English, I offer the 11 am Mass in Portuguese! A few of my pastor predecessors here at OLOA took on the duty to celebrate this Mass by sounding out aloud the words in the Roman Missal for the gathered community, the largest of the Sunday celebrations. Those in attendance are satisfied, thanks to great lectors, and a small but powerful choir. Once a month, a Cape Verdean Capuchin Franciscan priest comes down from Boston, and the Cape Verdean community there, to celebrate the 11 am Mass here.

MY EXPERIENCE AS GENERAL COUNCILOR

FR. STEPHEN BANJARE, SS.CC.,
COUNCILOR IN THE SS.CC. GENERAL
GOVERNMENT, ROME

So, the language is one of my liabilities. Outside Sunday Mass, I cannot converse in Portuguese. Fortunately, many community members speak English, some quite well. A diocesan priest once noted that we have three communities here:

- 1) Most recent arrivals from Cape Verde, still attentive to family and life there.
- 2) Those from Cape Verde who have been here for decades and have more American values and interests (less likely to know Portuguese).
- 3) English-speaking members from the region. In reality, there are two communities in this one Cape Verdean family called OLOA. Many of those who have been here longer have let go of their origins (although some still go to visit) and attend the 9 am Mass, while other residents still keep the origins alive, and chat with broken English.

Through it all, I strive to “live the love of God as found in the Hearts of Jesus and Mary.” I am the contemplative Mary, as I gaze at my brothers here, many of them so tall, and my sisters here, many of them so beautiful. I remember Fr. David Reid’s desire to begin some form of official ministry in Cape Verde. I try to bring the compassion of Jesus as I seek to understand the situations in life that members of the community have. What might be the pastoral responses to raise? In the spirit of Jesus and Mary, we bless the children after the Sunday Masses, telling them that they are beautiful. I participate in their festivities, especially Cape Verde week in late June or early July. We all celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of the Assumption in mid-August with a neighborhood procession and gusto.

Mary’s “fiat” brought about the Incarnation of Jesus, and the love of God for the world. I continue to ask the Lord about how I can continue that same reality here.



I feel honored, blessed, and humbled to be part of the General Government of the Congregation. The running theme of the General Chapter was ‘something has to change’ and indeed many things have changed for me and in me. It is an honor to be able to serve the Congregation at this level of service in authority. It is a privileged opportunity to know the Congregation more closely, to read and to learn about historical and spiritual heritage, great personalities and even to be part of lives of many brothers, sisters and lay members. I feel blessed with the encounters with brothers, sisters and secular branch members which have been enriching, inspiring and encouraging. On one hand, it is the most humbling experience and on the other hand, a very challenging experience for me, especially due to lack of language skills. There has been a moment of frustration, disappointment and discouragement. But these experiences are teaching me to let go and let God. In spite the challenges, I remain hopeful and optimistic, excited and enthusiastic and most importantly, be useful at the service of the Congregation. Please bless me with your prayers as I do for each of you. May the Sacred hearts of Jesus and Mary, be honored and gloried by our lives. Amen.

CONNECTING WITH AND SHARING THE HEART OF CHRIST

BY FR. BILL GURAL, SS.CC.



THE PHOTO WAS TAKEN SUN. JAN. 18 IN TIJUANA, MX ON THE TIJUANA OUTREACH MISSION PROJECT EPIPHANY TRIP.

The charism we have been given is--- “to contemplate, live, and proclaim the love of God manifest in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary”.

I am grateful for our contemplative component to our order. New to the Catholic Church in 2009, Eucharistic Adoration fed and grounded me. I am grateful for our history of Adoration, even woven into our long title...“and of Perpetual Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament”.

Let us continue to nurture that love of God found in the Sacred Heart of Jesus which the Good Father and Good Mother discovered in the Sacred Heart Association in Poitiers. Pope Francis in his encyclical on the Sacred Heart of Jesus speaks of a similar love which draws others to the Lord. “Mission, as a radiation of the love of the heart of Christ, requires missionaries who are themselves in love and who, enthralled by Christ, feel bound to share this love that has changed their lives”. (Dilexit Nos 209)

Our four protectors: St. Dominic, St. Augustine, St. Pachomius and St. Bernard (and St. Benedict co-patron of our order) all have strong contemplative aspects; they taught and gave the example

of living in presence of God always. (I remember well the four statues of the Protectors we had at the atrium at the Retreat House in Wareham, standing like sentinels between the two houses.)

“To Contemplate” is to have an experience of God- a fully living relationship with the Lord, not an action using the eyes of the body but rather a manifestation of the heart that loves”. -Guillermo Rosas, ss.cc. St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, such a holy and loving friend of our congregation, had her sisters start each day with a Holy Hour and mass, saying that they could not do the work they were called to without starting the day with prayer, with the Lord. She said: “I know I would not be able to work one week if it were not for that continual force coming from Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament (during my Holy Hour of Adoration).” I find our time of prayer as brothers to be very life giving and community building.

Fr. Pat Crawley told me that our prayer as Sacred Hearts always manifests in apostolic activity. St. Damien of Moloka’i began his day at St. Philomena Church with adoration, praying the divine office

and with mass. He said he could not have done his work with the lepers had not Jesus accompanied him in the Blessed Sacrament. "Believe in the value of action; carried out according to the plan of God, it will deepen and sanctify you.... Action also purifies prayer, in a certain sense, it is a test of the genuineness of prayer: 'Not everyone who says to me "Lord, Lord," shall inherit the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven" (Mt. 7, 21). And doing unto the least of Christ's brethren is doing unto Him "(Mt. 25, 40) - Rule of Life 29.

Fr. John Sawchenko quoted Pope Francis in his article on *Dilexit Nos* (He has loved us): "What kind of worship would we give to Christ if we were to rest content with an individual relationship with him and show no interest in relieving the sufferings of others and helping them live a better life?" (# 205).

Witnessing brothers fulfilling this in their being there for those in distress, grief, and pain. Ministering to the dying on the hospitals and to their families—praying with them, "weeping with those who weep". Spending time with those recently arrived in our country, valuing them Assisting the Shepherds (Pastors). Deep listening with the Heart of Christ. Supporting young people in their walk with Jesus. Our loving Lord gives us the blessing of serving Him in His Harvest.

Let us keep focusing on Christ and building up the His Reign while distractions run rampant. Mother Teresa said she was called to be faithful, not successful. Fr. Mike Barry recently spoke at the Rite of Commissioning for the Secular Branch members. "Contemplation is key; God is teaching us something. Read a Scripture passage three times and listen to what God is saying. We cannot proclaim with contemplation. We need fuel from prayer and the Eucharist. Let the Sacred Heart touch us."



THE IMPORTANCE OF ADORATION IN MY LIFE

BY JOHN SAWCHENKO, SS.CC.



When I was first ordained, there was a difficulty in my ministry. I felt a bit overwhelmed in learning the ropes. And this produced a certain level of anxiety. I couldn't find rest in anything I was doing. I was too anxious to be present. So eventually I decided to incorporate a time of Adoration after breakfast, before going to my office. And this made all the difference in my life as a priest. I have grown to deeply look forward to this time with Him, though sometimes I am tempted to forego it when there is work to be done. But I remind myself that this time with Him is the most important thing for me to do. In Adoration, sometimes I read, sometimes I write, sometimes I just am quiet. Sometimes there is a lot to bring from my life in the world to Him, and sometimes I don't feel like speaking or thinking.

I find it difficult to explain what happens there, but I can try: I feel life itself deepen, the mystery of His love becomes real to me, and I feel composure to enter the day with Him on my heart. Adoration is such a subtle experience; it's even hard to notice what's happening; it is something I only realize later as I find I can be present to people differently. I can say that for me, my life takes on its meaning precisely there. It is then that I can contemplate the love of God in the experience of listening to others, speaking to them, and sharing in ministry.

HUMOR FROM THE HEARTS

In the narthex of a church, a father points to his son some framed photographs with a plaque underneath which reads "Those who have died in service". The boy asks his dad, "Which service? The 8 or the 10 am?"

Fr. John Roche, SS.CC.

I was called to bless a home during my assignment in South Texas. The residence turned out to a worn mobile home with dirt floors in places. I was somewhat concerned when the man told me that he had been kidnapped before.

He also told me that his neighbors were involved in *brujeria*. I thought there are worse things people could be doing other than making beer or moonshine. I probably came across as being nonchalant. The man replied, "*No, con demonios, el diablo*". I got the sense I was wrong about his neighbor making alcohol.

When I shared this story with one of the Spanish speaking *servidoras* at the church, she explained to me that *brujeria* was the Spanish word for witchcraft. Then I understood the desire for the house blessing.

Fr. Bill Gural, ss.cc.

A boy is looking at the tabernacle light during a mass. He asks to his dad, "When it turns green can we go?"

Fr. John Roche, SS.CC.



LITTLE LAYLA WAS OFF TO HER VERY FIRST PENANCE AT ST. STEPHEN'S PARISH, THE LAST ONE IN HER FIRST COMMUNION CLASS TO DO SO.

SHE HAD LOOKED IN THE MISSALETTE'S EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE FOR THE WORD TO DESCRIBE "FIGHTING WITH ONE'S BROTHERS AND SISTERS." SHE BELIEVED SHE FOUND IT.

SHE WENT IN TO SEE FR. CLEMENTS, THE AGING PASTOR. "SO, TELL ME YOUR SINS," SAID THE PASTOR. SHE REPLIED, "I COMMITTED ADULTERY 5 TIMES." THE PASTOR CHUCKLED QUIETLY, TO HIMSELF.

"ARE YOU SORRY FOR YOUR SINS?" THE LITTLE GIRL FROWNEED, "NO, IT WILL PROBABLY HAPPEN NEXT WEEK TOO."

FR. DAVID LUPO, SS.CC.

ASH WEDNESDAY HOMILY

BY FR. JOHN ROCHE, SS.CC.



Rarely do we travel in straight lines – especially in Ireland. Whereas, in America you can sometimes see the road stretching before you for miles and miles – which amazes us from Ireland. Like traveling in Ireland our lives are full of twists and turns, and some roads seem to double back on themselves. As we travel, we often look at a map to see how we are progressing and consider if we need to make some corrections in the way we are going.

Lent is a time for pulling up and seeing which direction my life is heading in. Lent is our spiritual GPS – a time of recalibration, of pulling over and studying the map of our souls. It's an invitation to ask profound questions:

- Where am I going?
- What direction am I truly heading?
- What unseen detours have I taken?
- What landmarks of faith have I missed?

The ashes we receive today are not a mark of failure, but a sign of hope. They remind us that from dust we come, and to dust we shall return – but in between, we have this miraculous opportunity to live, to love, to grow, to be transformed...

Another way of looking at life is that as the days lengthen, and spring whispers its promise of renewal, we're called to a different kind of turning. Not just the agricultural turning of soil preparing for new growth, but the deeper, more transformative turning of our spirit – what theologians call *metanoia*: a complete turnaround of heart, a radical reorientation of our entire being towards God.

So Lent is a time of looking at life's road map –

What changes do I need to make?

What turns do I have to make in my life so that I can reach the destination I want?

Closing Prayer

Lord of the winding road,
Guide our steps,
Illuminate our path,
Transform our hearts.
Amen.





"WE PREACH **LOVE**"

GGCC. Rule of life

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