

Ask Mason & Teo



Do you need a degree to become a priest?

Aloha Mason & Teo, Please advise a group of us that meet daily in the mornings at Ala Moana Beach on the prerequisites to become a Catholic priest. I was always under the impression that to become a priest an individual would need some kind of college degree, plus attend a seminary, and have some kind of doctorate degree maybe in theology before being ordained. My companions disagree with me, saying all they need is to be devoted as Catholic individuals. Your information will be greatly appreciated. (Questioner)

Dear Questioner, There are many vocations in the Catholic Church. The word "vocation" means call or summons. God has first loved us. Out of his love, he called each one of us into existence. Because he loves us as sons and daughters, he wishes us to be like him in his love. Thus, his call to each of us when we were created is a call to love. Love is meant to include all that we do. Our vocation really is to do each thing with love — for God and for others.

The Vatican II document "Gaudium et Spes" states, that a person "cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself."

Think about it. Our greatest joy is not getting ourselves the greatest gift, like an iPhone or a flat-screen TV or doing something for the self. We find our greatest joy in giving someone else a gift or doing something for someone else.

God programmed our DNA that way.

However, our American culture today has pushed God aside. That is why the Christian community needs the witness of men and women who can show the fruitfulness of their life centered in God and express the genuine meaning of daily work in communion with Christ and the church. Within the Christian Community, each person must discover his or her own personal vocation and respond to it generously.

Each Christian is invited to cooperate in building up the church. Individual vocations vary between being single, married, consecrated, religious and priest. All vocations are various forms of the one vocation that we all have — to love God and each other.

In a religious context, the term "vocation" is usually a call to the consecrated, religious or priestly life.

Each vocation requires preparation. Marriage is preceded by courtship and planning for the future. Religious, which include brothers and nuns, or sisters, go through a postulancy and novitiate and receive formation throughout a period of temporary vows. Future priests study in a seminary for six to eight years before ordination.

According to Father Peter Dumag, vocations director of the Diocese of Honolulu, men who decide to pursue priesthood right out of high school and en-

ter a college seminary would take a minimum of eight years: four spent studying philosophy and obtaining a college degree, and four more years in a major seminary studying theology.

For men who already have a college degree before they enter the seminary, it would take six years. The formal training integrates the four pillars of seminary formation: spiritual, intellectual, human and pastoral formation. If you are discerning a vocation, call Father Dumag at the Diocesan Office of Clergy, 585-3343, or email him at mana@rcchawaii.org.

We need ordained ministers who in their preaching, celebration of the Eucharist and other sacraments guide Christian communities on the paths of eternal life. We need religious consecrated men and women who witness and foster in the people of God an awareness of the need to respond with holiness of life to the love of God outpoured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit.

We need young people to establish a personal relationship with Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life, so that Jesus may enter their world and open their hearts to know him more and follow him in love.

We need parents to be close to their children and help prevent them from being overwhelmed by the material world and guide them toward the real joy in Jesus Christ.

And we need catechists and Christian teachers that will encourage in young people a sense of vocation and guide them to discovering God's plan for each of them.

Yes! Our Christian vocation is to love, and life itself is a vocation. It begins in the realization that God loves us so immensely that he gave his Son to show us the way.

In this season of Advent may your hearts be filled with liberating joy and may your life be lived with charity and the compassion of Christ toward all in following the example of our Blessed Mother who said, "behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word." (Luke 1:38)

Mason and Teo Matsuda are parishioners of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Ewa Beach and have served in youth and young adult ministries for years. Write to them at yaadvice@yahoo.com.



Retreatants from the University of Hawaii-Manoa's Newman Center organize themselves for a photo somewhere under the rainbow at the airport in Kalaupapa.

In full retreat

University students find spiritual refreshment in land of St. Damien

By Father Russ Roide, SJ
Special to the Herald

Seven University of Hawaii, Manoa, undergrad and graduate students, who are all Newman Center members, and I took a different kind of retreat, Nov. 20-22, when we flew to Kalaupapa, Molokai, for a weekend of reflection.

The retreat began on Friday afternoon with a charter flight to the peninsula. St. Francis Church pastor Sacred Hearts Father Felix Vandebroek and Franciscan Sisters Rose Annette Ahuna and Theresa Chow were there to greet us and take us to the visitors' quarters to settle in.

We got oriented to our retreat in this unique place by watching the extraordinary documentary "Kalaupapa Heaven," which is made up of interviews of Kalaupapa's Hansen's disease patients, their history and their lives in Kalaupapa. Carol Franco, the Kalaupapa nursing supervisor, gave an extremely helpful introduction to the 2007 film by Australian director Paul Cox who had directed the 1998 feature film "Molokai — The Story of Father Damien."

After our screening, the students had time for prayer and reflection before they made their way to Fuesina's, a gathering place, to meet some National Park Service staff and patients, who were having a snack before dinner. It was a blessing to meet Gertrude, a parishioner at St. Francis Church, who has been at Kalaupapa since she was 11 years old. The students visited again with her on Saturday evening.

Following dinner, the students had a retreat presentation and another unusual meditation while viewing the rare eclipse of the moon and a sky full of stars, which we rarely get to see in Honolulu.

The next morning, our group helped the Sisters of St. Francis at the Mother Marianne Library, organize books and clean, something that Sister Rose Annette said was a wonderful service to the Kalaupapa community. In the afternoon, we made a series of meditations and walks at Kalawao and visits to the graves of St. Damien, Brother Joseph Dutton, members of the Sacred Hearts Congregation and the historic St. Philomena Church, which has re-

cently been restored and is a spiritual gem.

On Saturday afternoon, I celebrated a Mass with the students at St. Philomena and the students then returned to Kalaupapa for the evening. We started off Sunday morning by leading the singing at the parish Mass celebrated by Father Felix, at which I was the homilist.

After Mass, we visited with parishioners and went over to the parish hall, whose walls are covered with historic pictures which Franco helped explain. That afternoon we said aloha to Father Felix, the sisters and everyone who made our stay so memorable.

The feedback from the students who made the retreat was outstanding. This and two more retreats coming up in March and April were possible thanks to a grant from the Clarence T.C. Ching Foundation.

The students picked to attend our first retreat are involved in the Newman Center's weekly Bible study, small faith group discussion, music ministry, Tuesday morning homeless outreach at Ala Moana Beach Park, or other activities.

Jesuit Father Roide is the director of the Newman Center at the University of Hawaii-Manoa.

Movie reviews

Ratings



CNS photo/Warner Bros.

Christian tale of human solidarity

The Blind Side (Warner Bros.): Inspirational family drama, based on real events, in which a wealthy white couple (Sandra Bullock and Tim McGraw) in Memphis, Tenn., offer shelter to a homeless black student (Quinton Aaron) from their children's (Lily Collins and Jae Head) school and, as he becomes an increasingly integral part of their clan, help him to hone his football skills while also hiring a determined tutor (Kathy Bates) to raise his academic standing. Driven by Bullock's field-sweep-

ing performance as the feisty, religiously motivated adoptive mother, writer-director John Lee Hancock's unapologetically Christian tale of human solidarity across racial and class divides, adapted from Michael Lewis' 2006 best-seller "The Blind Side: Evolution of a Game," is funny, shrewd and ultimately uplifting. Brief nongraphic marital lovemaking, at least one profanity, a few sexual and drug references, a half-dozen crass terms. A-III (PG-13)

Conference of Catholic Bishops Office for Film & Broadcasting classifications: A-I – general patronage; A-II – adults and adolescents; A-III – adults; L – limited adult audience, films whose problematic content many adults would find troubling; O – morally offensive.

Motion Picture Association of America ratings: G – general audiences, all ages admitted; PG – parental guidance suggested, some material may not be suitable for children; PG-13 – parents are strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13; R – restricted, under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian; NC-17 – no one 17 or under admitted; NR – no rating.

- 2012A-III (PG-13)
- Armored.....A-III (PG-13)
- The Blind Side.....A-III (PG-13)
- BrothersA-III (R)
- A Christmas CarolA-I (PG)
- Fantastic Mr. Fox.....A-I (PG)
- Ninja Assassin.....O (R)
- Old Dogs.....A-II (PG)
- Pirate RadioO (R)
- Planet 51A-I (PG)
- The Princess and the Frog.....A-I (G)
- The Twilight Saga: New MoonA-II (PG-13)

time to stop a string of murders in Germany, save the agent (Naomie Harris) investigating them and wreak revenge on his former comrades. Pervasive violence, with mutilation, stabbings and gunplay, frequent bloody and grisly images and some rough and crude language. O (R)

The Princess and the Frog (Disney): Enchanting animated musical, set in 1920s New Orleans, in which a voodoo sorcerer (voice of Keith David) casts a spell that complicates the lives of a visiting prince (voice of Bruno Campos), the headstrong heiress he hopes to marry (voice of Jennifer Cody) and her industrious working-class best friend (voice of Anika Noni Rose). As directed and co-written by John Musker and Ron Clements, the lavish hand-drawn romance, which also features delightful voice work by Michael-Leon Wooley as a jazz-loving alligator and Jim Cummings as a Cajun firefly, emphasizes the value of love over material wealth and provides quality entertainment for all ages, though images of fire-breathing masks and evil sprites may scare some tots. A-I (G)

Armored (Screen Gems): Negligible heist flick about six guards employed by a Los Angeles armored car company who attempt to pull an inside job, during which only an Iraq War hero (Columbus Short) exhibits scruples and smarts; his greedy colleagues, led by his godfather (Matt Dillon), instead demonstrate the old adage about the paucity of honor among thieves. Working from a flimsy script, director Nimrod Antal keeps the nondescript action moving along without undue complications. Considerable,

though not excessive, action violence, including gunplay and knife use, some profanity, much crude language. A-III (PG-13)

Brothers (Lionsgate/Relativity): After his upstanding Marine brother (Tobey Maguire) is reported dead in Afghanistan, a newly released ex-con and charming ne'er-do-well (Jake Gyllenhaal) matures as he cares for his grieving sister-in-law (Natalie Portman) and young nieces (Bailee Madison and Taylor Geare), but his sibling, who has actually

been taken prisoner, suffers a moral breakdown in captivity that threatens to haunt him for life. Though a fine cast that also includes Sam Shepard as the family's Vietnam-vet patriarch do their best to lend intensity to this cautionary tale about the dehumanizing effects of war and the gulf between combat and civilian life, the cliches and simplistic characterizations in David Benioff's script leave director Jim Sheridan's adaptation of Susanne Bier's 2004 Danish film flatfooted. Sporadic intense violence, including

torture; drug use, adultery and suicide themes; a few uses of profanity; frequent rough and some crude language. A-III (R)

Ninja Assassin (Warner Bros.): Hyperactive, contrived and excessively violent comeback for the martial-arts genre with a thin plot, a heavily ramped-up spatter factor and soulful Korean pop star Rain (aka Jeong Ji Hoon) playing a stone-cold ninja fighter, trained from childhood to become an assassin, who breaks with his gang in

Twenty Something



Christina Capecchi | Celebrating life: the ultimate Christmas gift

The moment I uttered the words I knew they sounded silly: "What do you get the girl who has everything?"

Nothing, of course, suggests common sense. But the Pier 1 employee fielding my question saw I wasn't letting that pesky force stand in my way, as I milled through paper lanterns, artificial apples and \$3 bags of "mini river stones."

She suggested the very thing I had sworn off, a bottle of wine, then pointed out a \$22 walnut photo tray. This intrigued me: For someone with more pictures than

walls, here was a new place to stuff snapshots.

I knew I was in a predicament, shopping for a friend who filled an entire bookshelf with Williams-Sonoma cookbooks. Years later not a dab of vegetable oil has stained their pages.

I probably should've flipped through Sky Mall, the airplane magazine that showcases the weirdest stuff you never knew you needed (and can't afford): an Electronic Feng Shui Compass (\$159.99), a 3-Day Talking Forecaster (\$41.99), a Telekinetic Obstacle Course (\$99.95). Online you can choose from 44 alarm clocks – ones with MLB and NFL scores, ones built into robots and drum sets and, for the impossible to

rouse, a runaway clock that rolls around your bedroom and forces a blanket severance.

It got me thinking about the gifts we give – the things we can wrap, tape and tie, and the intangibles that mean the most. It seems we're beginning to make that distinction, a hard-won lesson of the recession's tail-end. A new Consumer Reports holiday shopping poll finds that Americans are planning to cut back on spending but expect no subsequent drop in yuletide cheer. Sixty five percent of us plan to curb holiday expenses, while 87 percent await a Christmas that is "as happy or happier than last year."

Perhaps we're returning to the origin of the word "gift," which is

Middle English for "talent." It pertains to a person's capacities, not her funds. This Advent, I challenge you to determine what you are uniquely suited to give – thanks to your job, your neighborhood, your family or your skill set – and offer it to someone who could use a lift.

Looking back on 2009, I remember the gifts that took time, not twenties. The neighbor who mowed my lawn. The Saturday morning Mom cleaned my house, readying it for company. Hugs from grandparents, voicemails I saved, emails I printed. And tucked in my journal, a stack of four thank-you notes from my soon-to-be sister-in-law, Jodie. "Thank you for the cutting board," one reads. "But thank you especially for just being the wonderful person that you are."

When Jodie's dad, Denis, died last month, we were devastated. The morning of his funeral, between Ave Maria and Taps, our grief was heavy. Then we em-

barked on a tour of Busch Stadium, home of Denis' beloved St. Louis Cardinals. As a teen Denis had worked as a Cardinals change boy and he later got his cousin Mickey a job there. Fifty-four years later, Mickey is now the manager of stadium operations, and he led our tour.

We stepped out of the dugout and onto the field, a Technicolor scene: green grass, red cardinals, silver Arch and blue sky. It was one of those moments when heaven hugs earth. We all could feel Denis beaming down on us.

Mickey gave us an incredible gift that day: a deeper connection to Denis. We will cherish it with each passing year. That is the ultimate Christmas gift, begun by Mary's brave "yes": to accept life, nurture it and honor it.

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