

# Our Lady of Chaminade

*Ke Lede o Kaminaka*



By: Fr. Damian Higgins

## Icon Blessing

### When:

January 21, 2009

### Where:

Mystical Rose Oratory

Chaminade University  
3140 Waialae Ave  
Honolulu, HI 96816

### Time:

11:00 a.m.

*In loving memory of*

***Kumu John Matthew***  
Keolamaka" **ainanakalāhuiokalani**  
**nokamehameha`ekolu Lake**

Chaminade University's first ZwmM-in-Residence





Commissioned by Dr. David Coleman and the Humanities and Fine Arts division at Chaminade in anticipation of the 125th anniversary of the Marianist presence in the Island of Hawaii, this icon depicts the familiar image of Mary and Christ with Polynesian characteristics. After a number of negotiations with Fr. Damien Higgins of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, a frequent presenter of iconography courses in Honolulu, the present design was agreed upon.

Based on the prototype of *Our Lady of Kykkos* (c. 1668), it shows a tender relationship between the

Mother and Child, but rather than gazing at one another they are looking out to the viewer and inviting all to participate in the relationship that they share with one another. The primary theological reflection of every Icon of the *Theotokos* ("God-bearer" or "One who carries God"), is that of the mystery of Incarnation, whereby human and divine come together and heaven and earth are reunited in true communion.

Mary wears the insignia of an *Ali'i*, a noble Hawaiian woman with royal associations. She is dressed in a wide wrap of Kapa cloth imbued with patterns of plants associated with Hawaiian culture and spirituality. The first set of patterns is the Kukui Nut or the Tree of Light and the associations with Christ as the "light of the world" (John 8:12), the next is the Taro, the staple or "bread" of the Hawaiian people. The next is the Bread Fruit which is a symbol of healing and finally, the white Hibiscus as a symbol of beauty and purity.



Mary rests on top of the Pacific Ocean on a Cherubim floating at her feet. Two angels with Kahili stand at attention on either side as the heavenly hosts witness the mystery of God becoming human. Above them are the sun and the moon representing not only the heavens but all of creation. They are commonly used in Byzantine hymnography to express the feelings and yearnings of the material world created by God.

In the two circles above the sun and moon are the monograms for the Mother of God, *Theotokos*, with the stars directly above which are traditionally placed on the outside of her veil representing the miraculous nature of her giving birth and remaining a virgin before, during and after giving birth. Tahitian black pearls were donated to represent all the islands. Christ has two Opals to reflect the glory of the rainbow so present in Hawaiian scenery and as the promise of God to Noah to create covenant between heaven and earth.

The two side panels of the triptych include the founders of the Marianist Community: Father William Joseph Chaminade, Mother Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon, and Marie Thérèse Charlotte de Lamourous. Included with each founder are scrolls expressing their faith in the Incarnation. As an extension of this faith, Father Chaminade is accompanied by images of Chaminade University of Honolulu with its roots in St. Louis College. The women are accompanied by the images and symbols of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the people of France they served and inspired. They too are set in the waters of the sea which connect the diverse parts of the world together in one human family.

The icons were prepared in Augusta, Georgia at Fr. Damian's studio. They are painted on poplar boards that were aged, soaked in hide glues and then covered with old altar linens and layers of gesso (crushed marble and rabbit skin glue). The 23k gold leaf back ground and haloes are set in red *bole* (clay with fish glue) and the entire image was painted with egg yolk (egg tempera) which was then varnished with *olifa* (linseed and stand oil and Japanese drier).

