



ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE STATE OF HAWAII  
**DIOCESE OF HONOLULU**

WITNESS TO JESUS



October 2018

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

Each year in mid-October, I announce to Walter, “Letting you know we are in Star Light, Star Bright mode.” [Interpretation: Internal GPS set to destination. Total focus required.] A few days ago, Walter excitedly entered my office to say he had a great idea for this year’s program: fresh Christmas trees for all the families. Imagine a caravan of tree-toting cars turning out of WCCC onto Kalanianaʻole Highway. Yes! Such inspiration!

My mind drifted to 2000. I was a new hire becoming acquainted with Walter, my new boss. I learned that he was a long-time volunteer at the Women’s Community Correctional Center (WCCC). He said many of the inmates were mothers unseen and forgotten by their families; and many of their children had feelings of abandonment toward their mothers. With this sad picture swimming around in our heads, we decided we could try do something to bring about healing and hope for the mothers and children. The next Monday morning, Walter walked into my office and handed me a scrap of paper. Scribbled in various handwriting were the names and ages of children and phone numbers for their caregivers. My assignment: find gift sponsors for the children. When all the gifts were accounted for, each gift was tagged with the child’s name and a message, “Merry Christmas! Love, Mom.” Walter and I loaded our vehicles and embarked on a mission to bring glad tidings to 61 children...a mission that would go far beyond our expectations.

One of the first deliveries on my route was to a public housing complex. When I walked up the sidewalk with an armload of gifts, several little children swarmed around me. They called out and Tutu opened the door leading to a tiny kitchenette that opened to a small living room furnished with a ‘50’s style laminate table and 2 matching chairs. My attention went immediately from the woven lauhala mat that laid over the cement floor to a large brown Christmas tree taped to the bare wall. It was decorated with ornaments her mo’opuna had crafted from paper bags, brightly colored with crayons, cut out, and glued to the precious tree. It was stunningly beautiful, and I complemented the artists, who were instructed by Tutu to place their gifts beneath the tree. Tutu’s humility and simplicity radiated in her smile and the joy that her grandchildren had a Christmas present; and most importantly, it was from their mom, her incarcerated daughter. It would be a good Christmas after all for her 5 little mo’opuna.

As I look back on those 18 years and the extensive growth of the program which now includes the Hawaii Youth Correctional Facility, I smile as I acknowledge what my heart has always known. *Star Light, Star Bright!* was commissioned by God and prompted in our hearts by the Holy Spirit to extend compassion, love and mercy to these especially vulnerable families. A mustard seed grew into a huge shade tree!

This year’s party is on **Saturday, December 8, Noon-4:00 p.m.** at WCCC. To ensure the program’s continuation, kindly complete the enclosed Sponsor Form and e-mail or mail it to our office. Online donations can be made at [www.catholicahawaii.org/starlight](http://www.catholicahawaii.org/starlight).

With this 19<sup>th</sup> year of Star Light, Star Bright, Walter will be stepping down on December 31 to enjoy retirement and I will turn the program over to a very capable team of volunteers. We both wish to thank you for your enthusiastic support over the years for the families we have served together. It has been an incredible journey!

God bless you!

Deacon Walter Yoshimitsu  
Chancellor

Paulette Vernay  
Program Coordinator