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# Hawaii Catholic Herald

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## Layman. Soldier. Saint?

*The diocese takes an official step toward the possible canonization of Civil War veteran Joseph Dutton*

**By Darlene J.M. Dela Cruz**  
*Hawaii Catholic Herald*

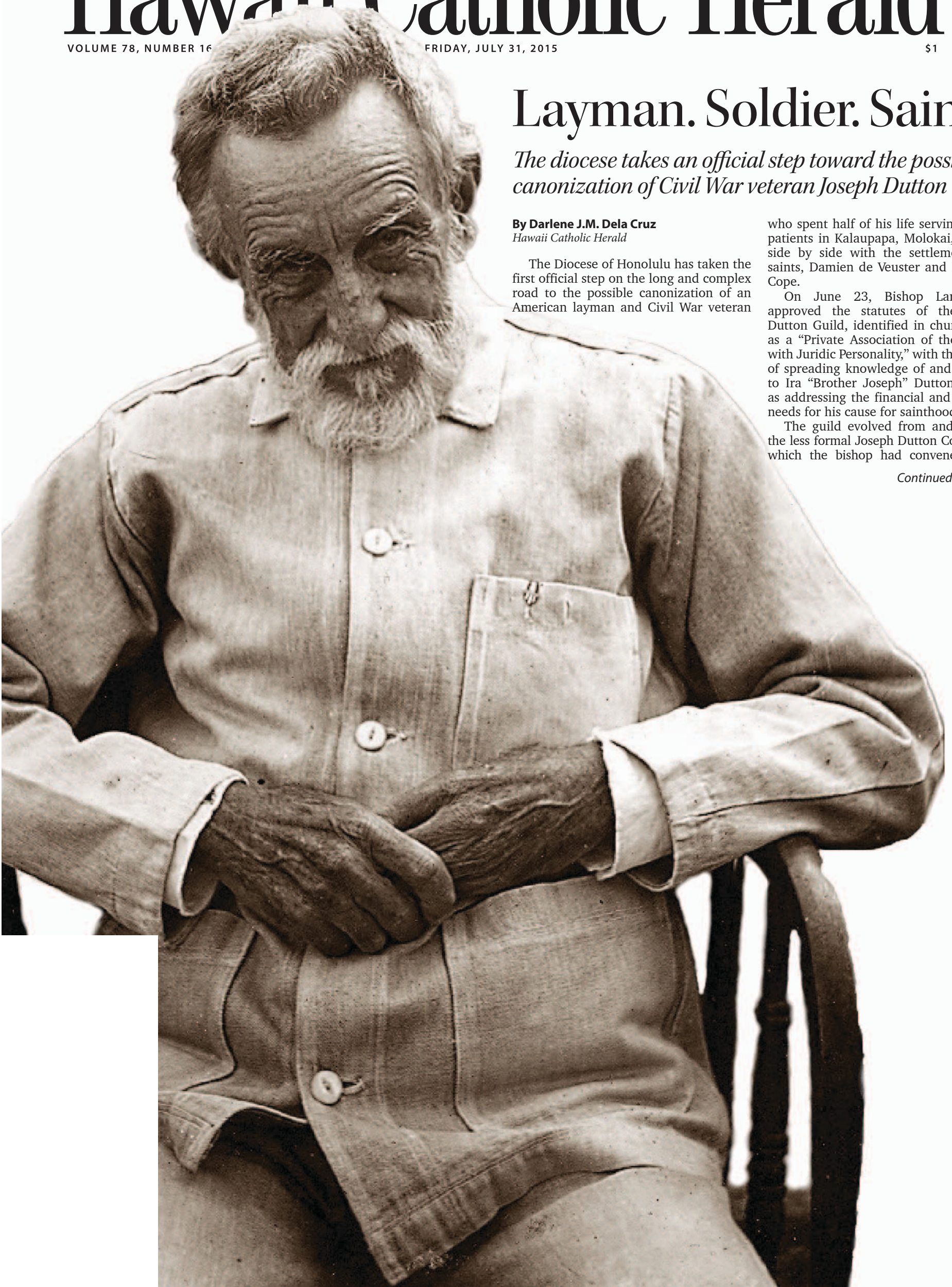
The Diocese of Honolulu has taken the first official step on the long and complex road to the possible canonization of an American layman and Civil War veteran

who spent half of his life serving leprosy patients in Kalaupapa, Molokai, working side by side with the settlement's two saints, Damien de Veuster and Marianne Cope.

On June 23, Bishop Larry Silva approved the statutes of the Joseph Dutton Guild, identified in church terms as a "Private Association of the Faithful with Juridic Personality," with the mission of spreading knowledge of and devotion to Ira "Brother Joseph" Dutton, as well as addressing the financial and logistical needs for his cause for sainthood.

The guild evolved from and replaces the less formal Joseph Dutton Committee, which the bishop had convened a few

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# Diocese moves toward possible canonization ‘Brother’ Joseph Dutton

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years ago with people interested in promoting the Dutton cause.

### Act of atonement

Ira Dutton was born to Protestant parents in Stowe, Vermont, on April 27, 1843, and raised in Wisconsin.

He fought in the U.S. Civil War, rising to the rank of captain with the 13th Wisconsin Volunteers. Discharged from the Army in 1866, Dutton endured several tumultuous years with a failed marriage and alcohol abuse.

He worked difficult jobs to support himself, including the bringing the remains of soldiers back from Civil War battlefields to the common burial ground that is now Arlington National Cemetery.

Dutton found solace in Catholicism and was baptized in the faith on his 40th birthday, April 27, 1883. He took Joseph as his baptismal name.

As an act of atonement for his turbulent post-war years, he traveled to Molokai in 1886 to join St. Damien in his work with leprosy patients. St. Damien affectionately called his American assistant “Brother.”

Dutton helped St. Damien until the priest’s death three years later in 1889, and remained in Kalaupapa for an additional 42 years, administering the Baldwin Home for boys and men. St. Marianne during that time cared for girls and women at Bishop Home.

Dutton died in 1931. His grave lies next to that of St. Damien on the grounds of St. Philomena Church in Kalawao.

### Building a case for sainthood

The remarkable story of Dutton’s life, conversion and service alongside Hawaii’s two saints has stirred discussions of his own potential for canonization. A path to sainthood, however, would require many intensive steps.

The Joseph Dutton Guild was created to be the hub of such efforts. Bishop Silva, in a June 23 interview, said the purpose of the group is to do research, raise funds, publicize Dutton’s life, and compile testimonials of Dutton’s spiritual intercession.

“They have to get the case together (demonstrating) that there is widespread devotion to him, that he lived a saintly life, that there is reason to believe he should be declared a saint,” the bishop said.

The guild will eventually present its findings to the bishop, who then appoints a local tribunal to assess the guild’s materials and officially make a case for Dutton’s cause to the Vatican.

The bishop himself is not a member of the guild in order to be able to evaluate its work more objectively.

A postulator appointed by the Joseph Dutton Guild would work directly with the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in the promotion of the cause. Among the postulator’s tasks is creating a “positio” or position paper, usually about a thousand pages, on Dutton’s cause to be reviewed by Vatican theologians and cardinals.

These are the preliminary phases a sainthood candidate must pass before he or she is considered first for beatification



Photo courtesy SSCC archives

and then canonization. By comparison, decades of work went into the causes of Father Damien and Mother Marianne before they were declared saints in 2009 and 2012, respectively.

Bishop Silva noted that the creation of the Joseph Dutton Guild is only a first step for those anticipating Dutton as Hawaii’s third saint.

At this point the cause of Joseph Dutton is nowhere on the Vatican’s “radar screen,” he said.

Damien and Marianne had the backing and resources of their religious orders — the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts and the Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities — to sustain their sainthood causes. Promoting Dutton, a layman, will be a grassroots effort by his devotees.

### A diverse, passionate group

The 10 members of the Joseph Dutton Guild are eager to lend their time, skills and prayers to the cause.

“Joseph Dutton is such a fascinating figure to whom so many can relate,” said Lilia Draime, the guild’s assistant public affairs officer. “The folks he has attracted thus far, both in the guild and otherwise, are so diverse, interesting and passionate about the work we are undertaking.”

Draime is originally from Warren, Ohio. As a student at the University of Notre Dame, she did her senior history department honors thesis on Dutton. Draime became involved with the guild after visiting Kalaupapa last year.

She plans to continue her studies on Dutton as she pursues her master’s degree in Catholic studies at the University of St. Thomas.

Draime explained in emails to the Hawaii Catholic Herald the varied tasks and backgrounds of the guild members. The group, she said, meets quarterly. Members on Oahu gather in downtown Honolulu and connect to those off-island via conference call. They also regularly keep in touch “about how things are going.”

Members include president Brenda Duarte, who has two

relatives living in Kalaupapa. Duarte has a master’s degree in public administration and expertise in investigation and research.

Maria L.V. Devera is a physician at Schofield Barracks Army Health Clinic. She has a deep devotion to St. Damien and St. Marianne, and became interested in Dutton’s potential for sainthood after visiting Kalawao in 2009.

Michael Warren, the guild’s public affairs officer, works full-time as a public affairs officer for the Department of the Army Deputy at Fort Shafter. He is a retired Army combat engineer who served 20 years on active duty. Warren is a parishioner at St. Augustine Church in Waikiki and a member of the Knights of Columbus.

Warren also works with his wife Cheryl J. Wilkinson, the founder and CEO of Transitional Assistance Inc., a nonprofit that provides veterans with professional business and personal coaching. Wilkinson is the guild’s vice president. She served in the Army Reserves and with the Department of Defense.

“We are fortunate to have such a dynamic and energetic group of people comprising the guild,” Draime said.

People who want to help the guild “have several options,” she said.

Monetary donations are needed “to help get our activities up and running, to also pay for various experts, including historians and notaries we will need to consult as our efforts advance.” Volunteers can lend their time and talents to the cause as well.

The guild also needs reports of “favors” attributed to Dutton’s intercession. To submit a report or inquiry, email josephdutton@rcchawaii.org or connect to one of the social media sites.

The guild manages pages about Dutton on Facebook (www.facebook.com/JosephDuttonHawaii), Twitter (@JosehDuttonHI) and LinkedIn (https://www.linkedin.com/company/joseph-dutton-guild).

“We are hopeful that we will draw more people to this great effort,” Draime said.

Brother Joseph Dutton, center front, with Kalaupapa boys and men

## Lost soldier, redeemed

By Cheryl J. Wilkinson

Special to the Herald

Cheryl J. Wilkinson, vice president of the Joseph Dutton Guild, shared with the Hawaii Catholic Herald a testimonial about her personal devotion to Dutton. Here is an excerpt.

I became involved when I was at Kalaupapa with my husband, Michael. I was standing by St. Damien’s gravesite, and Dr. Maria Devera came up to me and asked me if I knew of Dutton. I told her no. I stood by his grave, and she began to tell me his story. I swiftly began to fall in love with this veteran.

He was a Quarter Master, and towards the end of the war, he had to pick up the carcasses on the battlefields. I know for me, during the Persian (Gulf) War and remembering Highway 1 after it was bombed, the aftermath of the bodies ... was horrendous. I cannot imagine having to pick up the remains of our heroes.

(Dutton) talked about how at the end of the day he had to start taking a nip of alcohol to get through what he had to experience. He became an alcoholic. I am certain, I, too, would have to look for some sort of coping mechanism to deal with the horror of such an experience.

Dutton was a lost soldier who, at the end of the war, lost his marriage and struggled with alcoholism. So many of our veterans meet such a crossroads. Today, 22 veterans a day commit suicide. The other veterans transition to their life’s next journey.

For Dutton, one day he decided to go into a Catholic church. He found God. Later on, he heard of Father Damien helping leprosy patients on the island of Molokai. He knew that was his calling. It was a way to make his penitence, so to speak.

He managed to find his way to the island and dedicated the remaining 44 years of his life helping the Hansen’s disease patients. He treated them with the tools he learned from the military, with dignity and respect. He used his leadership skills and was able to form a viable social organization on the island. He learned from the people of Molokai as well.

Dr. Devera asked me if Michael and I would be interested in spreading the word of Dutton. I was very humbled and honored to have such an amazing task asked of me. I would do whatever I could to help this veteran get recognized.

We had St. Michael get us veterans through the war, and we needed a veteran to provide us such hope to get us through life after the war. I believe we can make a difference, as hope has and does have a big meaning. Dutton found that out by finding purpose in something greater than himself.