

Faith, hope and tenacity

In a stunning season, St. Joseph's Division II basketball team conquers the Big Island for a shot at a state title

Story and photos
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Hawaii Catholic Herald

Sometimes all it takes is a little bit of faith.
The tenacious boys varsity basketball team from St. Joseph School in Hilo demonstrated that this month as they capped off their season with a thrilling run that led to an unexpected shot at a state title.

The St. Joseph Cardinals, sporting a multicultural roster of young, gritty players, bested other Hawaii Island high schools to win the Big Island Interscholastic Federation Division II championship on Feb. 13.

The island's only Catholic school stunned the conference's No. 1 seed, Honokaa High, with a 51-50 victory.

A press release from St. Joseph School described the "come-from-behind" upset a "challenge" for the Cardinals and head coach Mike Scanlan. Two starters left the court in the first quarter with game-ending injuries. A freshman reserve was benched early in foul trouble.

The Cardinals were down to Honokaa 34-22 at halftime in the BIIF championship game. They overcame the deficit with a miraculous scoring run in the second half.

Ruka Suda, a St. Joseph School sophomore from Japan, sank a key 3-pointer with 58 seconds left in the fourth quarter to bring the score to 49-48 favoring the Cardinals.

Suda stole the ball off Honokaa in an ensuing possession, and with a layup sealed the BIIF championship for St. Joseph with a score of 51-50.

This was the Cardinals' first BIIF title since 2010.

"We were so scrappy and never gave up," said Coach Scanlan in the press release.

Scanlan continues the tradition of his family's dedication to St. Joseph. He stepped in to fill the coaching shoes of his father, Harry Scanlan-Leite, who headed the boys basketball team until his death in 2011.

After winning the BIIF title, the Cardinals and members of their school ohana scrambled for flights to Honolulu. The team claimed a berth in the Hawaii High School Athletic Association Division II state championship tournament, which ran from Feb. 18-20.

St. Joseph School and St. Francis School of Manoa were the only Catholic schools in the tournament.

In the opening round, St. Jo-



seph faced the basketball team from Seabury Hall, an Episcopal school on Maui. Their matchup drew nearly 100 passionate supporters from both schools to the Kaimuki High School gym the evening of Feb. 18.

The game was fast-paced, both teams ably running and defending the break. The Seabury Hall Spartans topped the St. Joseph Cardinals at halftime, 27-15. St. Joseph closed in valiantly on their opponents in the second half, but ultimately fell 38-33.

Seabury Hall, following their victory over the Cardinals, beat St. Francis School in the semi-final round of the tournament.

St. Joseph went on to face Kalani High School of Honolulu Feb. 19 to vie for 5th place in the HHSAA championships. The Cardinals lost in a close 50-48 overtime game.

The efforts of the boys basketball team nonetheless brought a positive spark to the small Hilo school. Principal Llewellyn Young told the Hawaii Catholic Herald via email that the Cardinals' steadfastness "shows that hard work, determination, and faith can lead to great accomplishments."

"We are so proud of our athletes and coaches," Young said.

According to Young, St. Joseph currently has 315 students enrolled in preschool through grade 12. The school, founded in 1869, is one of the oldest in the diocese.

The principal said the basketball team's Cinderella season is just one of the many encouraging milestones in athletics and academics St. Joseph has had this year. These achievements have inspired a fresh outlook for students, faculty and their families.

"Enrollment continues to increase, and the sports program continues to grow," Young said. "We finally have a junior varsity basketball team when we could barely fill a basketball team a couple years ago."

"The Lord has truly blessed St. Joseph School," he added. "We are very grateful."

Scenes from the Hawaii High School Athletic Association Division II state championship tournament opening round game between St. Joseph School and Seabury Hall School at Kaimuki High School gym Feb. 18. Clockwise from top: St. Joseph School senior Cole deSilva, No. 23, goes in for a layup against a Seabury Hall defender; freshman Titus Liu, No. 4, runs the ball down the court; junior Manato Fukuda, No. 1, looks to his teammates for an outlet.

Jesuit missionary's Newman Center retreat to ponder God's mercy

When he declared this year a Jubilee Year of Mercy, Pope Francis wanted the church to become a witness to mercy. He calls us to a journey that begins with spiritual conversion to help us live this year in light of the Lord's words: "Be merciful just as your

Father is merciful."

What does Jesus mean when he says we are to be merciful as our Father is merciful? How can we respond?

On March 7, 8 and 9, 7-8:30 p.m., at the Newman Center at the University of Hawaii-Manoa,

Jesuit Father Joe McHugh will reflect on the parables of mercy that give a deeper understanding of the Father's mercy to help us better grasp how we can live this mercy in our everyday lives.

These parables can be pathways to prayer to guide and

strengthen us in our call to mercy.

After working 20 years in Jamaica and Guyana, Father McHugh spent the past year giving retreats throughout Micronesia and in the Philippines. He brings a worldwide understanding of the need for mercy today.

"Mercy to the needy is a loan to God, and God pays back those loans in full." (Proverbs 19:17)

The retreat is \$10 per night or \$25 for all three evenings. No registration is needed. For more information contact Sharon Chiarucci at sharonlee@hawaii-antel.net. The Newman Center is located at 1941 East West Road, Honolulu.