

Fr. Kaleo Patterson
Nicene Creed Reflection
11.11.19
“he came down from
heaven.”

The Ulu from heaven.....

If Jesus had taken a wrong turn in the Sea of Galilee and ended up in Hanalei Bay (Kauai), he might have said to the Hawaiians there “I am the Ulu from heaven.”

In fact in the mo‘olelo (stories) of the origin of the Ulu or breadfruit tree we find a Christ-like parallel or association in the demi-god Kuka‘ilimoku, who comes to earth from heaven, to check things out and likes what he sees, he marries, has children, is having a wonderful life until a terrible famine comes upon the land, and a great hunger develops, and many are perishing. In this climate crisis, Kuka‘ilimoku says goodbye to his family and goes on a journey arriving in a lonely place, a field where he becomes the Ulu Tree, burying himself into the earth, to rise again, at first a sprout, and then a young tree, and finally producing wonderful fruit, which is then discovered by his family, and his people, and they eat of the breadfruit, and are saved from the famine.

In the Nicene Creed we have the phrase: he came down from heaven. Jesus comes to earth in a time of great physical and spiritual hunger, and we are reminded of his declaration in John 6:35 (NRSV and Baibala):

35 Jesus said to them, “I am the **bread** of life. Whoever comes to me will never be **hungry**, and whoever believes in me will never be **thirsty**.”

35 ‘Ōlelo maila ‘o Iesū iā lākou, ‘O wau nō ka **berena** e ola ai; ‘o ka mea e hele mai i o‘u nei, ‘a‘ole loa ia e **pōloli**; a ‘o ka mea e mana‘o‘i‘o mai ia‘u, ‘a‘ole loa ia e **make wai**.

The first Hawaiians learning the Nicene Creed, would not have difficulty understanding the *Heilsgeschichte* or salvation history embedded in the Nicene Creed:

Heilsgeschichte (Germ., ‘salvation-history’). The attempt (made initially by Christians) to discern a unifying thread in human, and especially in biblical history, that thread being the initiatives and actions of God in saving his people and the world. (Encyclopedia.com)

The Nicene Creed reminds us that Jesus came to earth to be the bread of life, (the Ulu from heaven), and in the Eucharist, we eat his body, and drink his blood! He is the vine and we are the branches. He is the living water and we will thirst no more. The incarnation ‘Enekelea (Catholic) is the kino lau and the hoailona of Jesus embodying many forms and manifestations, of the divinity and humanity.

kino lau

n. Many forms taken by a supernatural body, as Pele, who could at will become a flame of fire, a young girl, or an old hag. (wehewehe.org)

-‘ailona

hō.‘ai.lona Sign, symbol, representation, insignia, emblem, mark, badge, signal, omen, portent, target, credential, token of recognition, a lot that is cast; title (legal); depth sounding; to mark; to take a depth sounding; to draw lots. Cf. *hailona*, *kila* 2. Hō‘ailona helu, plural sign or marker, algebra. Hō‘ailona mahele, measure signature in music. Hō‘ailona kū‘auhau, hō‘ailona no ke kūlana, family crest or coat of arms. Hō‘ailona mō‘ī, badge or emblem of royalty, sceptre. Hō‘ailona pa‘i, printed stamp. Hō‘ailona manawa, time signature in music. Hō‘ailona lanakila, emblem or trophy of victory, trophy. Ka pana ‘ana aku i ka hō‘ailona (1 Sam. 20.20), shooting at the mark. (PPN faka‘ilonga.) (wehewehe.org)

But Jesus is more than kino lau or hoailona. Jesus was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary (EOW translation). The noun **incarnate** derives from the ecclesiastical Latin verb *incarno*, itself **derived from** the prefix *in-* and *caro*, "flesh", meaning "to make into flesh" or, in the passive, "to be made flesh".

The term Incarnate assigns a unique divinity and humanity of Jesus: He is the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14).

In the Nicene Creed we have salvation history, we have Jesus who comes from heaven, we have Jesus incarnate from the virgin Mary! He came down from heaven to be the bread of life for a hungry world, the Ulu from heaven!