



**Kalāheo High School Foundation
and Alumni Association**

Alumni Spotlight*

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School Edition

Dr. John Bergsma, Catholic Biblical Scholar and Theologian

Kalāheo High School Class of 1989

Alumnus Dr. John Bergsma’s accomplishments are no surprise to those who knew him as a student at Kalāheo High School. He is a Full Professor of Theology at the Franciscan University of Steubenville in Steubenville, Ohio. He served as a pastor for four years in Grand Rapids, MI, before pursuing a Ph.D. in Theology at the University of Notre Dame, graduating with high honors in 2004.

Bergsma’s recently-published seventh book—*A Catholic Introduction to the Bible: The Old Testament*—consists of



1,060 pages and offers readable answers to who, when, why, and what in the Old

Testament. Coauthored with Brant Pitre, the book examines the literature from historical, cultural, and theological perspectives. It is available on Amazon. Five-star reviews abound.

Among the lengthy lists of accomplishments in his Curriculum Vitae are his seven books; 26 academic essays, articles, and reviews; and eight languages—Akkadian, Aramaic, French, German, Classical Greek, Classical Hebrew, Latin, and Ugaritic.

Bergsma’s father, Naval Captain Herbert L. Bergsma, was Command Chaplain for the First Marine Amphibious Brigade (later the First Marine Expeditionary Brigade) and resided with his family at Kāne’ohe Marine Corps Air Base. His son John was one of Kalāheo’s many military students, and he took full advantage of course

offerings and activities.

As a member of Kalāheo’s band and its president as a senior, John played first trombone for four years, including in the marching and jazz bands. For three years, he played in the pit orchestra for the combined area schools’ Broadway musical productions of *The Boyfriend*, *The Pajama Game*, and *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* at Castle High School’s theater, now the Ron E. Bright Performing Arts Center. He also played in the orchestra for the all-Kalaheo production of *Oliver!* and in the pep band at every football game and every basketball home game.

For two years, he played on the tennis team as second singles. During his two years as vice president of the National Honor Society, he coordinated two successful blood drives held in the music room.

By scoring well on six Advanced Placement exams—Physics AB, Calculus AB, English Literature and Composition, American History, Art History, and European History—he earned college credit for seven courses, including two credits for AP Literature. (He entered Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, with the status of a sophomore which enabled him to complete his B.A. in Classical Languages in three years.)

John garnered four band letters, two tennis letters, and a number of academic awards in different subjects. He was first runner-up in the “general scholarship” category of the Hawaii statewide Sterling Scholar awards competition in 1989 and was also a National Merit Scholar recipient. He graduated *summa cum laude*, with

Honors, and as co-valedictorian.

Twenty years after graduation, the Kalāheo High School Foundation and Alumni Association recognized Dr. Bergsma’s achievements with a 2009 Alumni Honor Award. He is one of several Kalāheo alumni whose photos are displayed on the History and Pride Wall in the school office. He and his wife Dawn reside with their eight children in Steubenville, Ohio. He continues to fulfill speaking engagements in the U.S. and abroad.

Additional information is available at www.johnbergsma.com and on YouTube. — Martha L. Robertson

“I remember an amusing conversation with John and another boy in my classroom after school where both agreed they had never seen so many pretty girls gathered in one place like at Kalaheo High School. They found the multicultural blend of races so intriguing. I was so proud when John Bergsma, Robbie Rickenbrode, and Matt Dickson were declared National Merit Semifinalists their Senior year at Kalaheo. It was an outstanding year for scholarship.”— Karen Kanda, Retired KHS Educator

***Alumni Spotlight is a series of articles to encourage excellence and promote school pride. If you read this article, please send comments to mrobert575@aol.com**

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