



Celebrating 40 Years!

Dear Friend of Las Casas,

As Las Casas celebrates 40 years of ministry with Native Americans, the current board of Las Casas extends deep appreciation to the Dominican Leadership Conference for establishing the first board. The ministry of Dominican Sisters and Friars on reservations throughout the Northern Hemisphere was seen as a significant ministry. The name Las Casas comes from Bartolomé de las Casas (1484 -18 July,1566) who was a 16th-century Spanish social reformer and Dominican. His extensive writings, the most famous being *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* and *Historia de Las Indias*, chronicle the first decades of colonization of the West Indies and focus particularly on the atrocities committed by the colonizers against the Indigenous People. He is most remembered today as an eloquent defender of the rights of the Native people of Latin America and the Caribbean.

To all of you we extend our deepest gratitude for your contributions to the Las Casas ministry through your donations and as subscribers to this newsletter over the years. Your generosity has helped the Las Casas board continue the ministry established forty years ago. The venue has changed over time, but the ministry to partner with the Native American Tribes to continue their deep spirituality and profound respect for all of God's creation continues as such a gift.

We owe a debt of gratitude to Gloria Glynn, OP (Sinsinawa) for her willingness to serve on the board since 2014. Gloria served on the grant committee during her tenure. This committee connects with the sisters and friars on the reservation and encourages them to submit proposals for funding and then processes all the requests. As we thank Gloria, we celebrate in this issue the outstanding work of Diane Poplawski, OP (Racine) who has served in various roles on the Las Casas Board since 2001.

Throughout the newsletter there are short stories from Dominicans sharing the many ways your contributions enable the board to offer grants and scholarships to support their ministry. This past summer at the annual Tekakwitha Conference, I had the distinct pleasure of sharing with some of the recipients their many experiences. The Conference was a powerful experience of prayer, liturgy, reflection, and presentations incorporating the rich culture of the Native American people.

Our thanks for the gifts received in the past in honor of birthdays, jubilees, and anniversaries or in memory of someone you know and love.

As we experience the beauty and significance of the fall and harvest season, let us give thanks.

St. Kateri Tekakwitha, pray for us.

Nathalie Meyer, OP
Nathalie Meyer, OP
President for the Las Casas Board



Every Thursday at St. Kateri Tekakwitha Parish in Peshawbestown, Michigan, a dinner is held for the Odawa and Chippewa community of the Grand Traverse Bay Tribe. This dinner was begun by Donna Swallows, a member of the Tribe and of St. Kateri Parish, who wanted to do something to be of service.

Donna plans and prepares the meals and I help prepare desserts. The dinner is open to anyone, even if they are not a member of the parish. We never know how many will attend on any given Thursday, but those who do come, are given nourishment for their bodies, plus hospitality and good conversation at the end of the day. The grant that we received from Las Casas has been very helpful with the weekly dinners. It has helped make it possible for us to provide more protein and more diverse dinner options. The dinners have been a great way to strengthen the bonds of the parishioners and to welcome those who are not.

We are very grateful to have received the grant. Megwetch!

Susan Gardner, OP [Adrian]



Historical Snapshot on our 40th Anniversary

Recalling a brief history of Las Casas over 40 years is an inspiring and grateful look at a collaborative ministry of Dominicans in the United States. It was started in 1977 in response to the need among the Cheyenne and Arapaho People for legal aid. Al Broderick, OP and Regis Ryan, OP initiated the effort by starting an organization, LEAPCAT, Legal Assistance to the People of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes. Ministry grew, as over the years many Congregations saw members going to Oklahoma to minister to needs as they developed or were recognized. Some sites were educational, some a ministry of presence and others were “hands on” for immediate assistance or involved in community organizing. The legal aid assistance ended in 1981 and the other ministries continued.

By 2004 only one ministry site was left in Oklahoma at Canton, cared for by Mary Ann Cirillo, OP (Hope) and JoAnn Fleischaker, OP (Adrian). They concluded the official ministry there in 2005, but continued living there in retirement and responding to the “door ministry” – people coming to ask for help. JoAnn has left, but Mary Ann continues as you can read in the article “Sister Bags”.

In fall of 2006 the Las Casas Board began a new ministry of networking and providing startup grants for projects needed at ministry sites and later scholarships to provide education and updating for those ministering with Native Americans. Since then fifty-eight grants and nine scholarships have been given. Each newsletter highlights some of the grants and scholarships awarded the previous year.

Marilyn Winter, OP [Adrian]



When a group of women decide to do something, they work until their goal is met. The Tekakwitha group from Blessed Sacrament Parish in Lame Deer, Montana, knew they would have to fly to San Francisco for the 2016 National Tekakwitha Conference. Food sales, bingos, donations, and grants, including one from Las Casas, resulted in the \$15,000 that was needed. Nineteen parishioners boarded planes for San Francisco. Some of the women who had previously attended the Tekakwitha Conferences knew what to expect. Other women were eager for what awaited them.

What impressed these women about the conference?

Myrna appreciated the prayer services, the healing service, and the opportunity to share with and learn about other groups. She felt that the conference taught her more about St. Kateri Tekakwitha and about her own faith. Myrna also commented that: "Working together led to getting along and having fun."

Johanna liked the way the parish worked together to raise the money needed to attend the conference. Johanna stated that: "The conference was a spiritual retreat for me." She believed that there were awesome choices of workshop topics. The healing service was powerful for her.

Norma and Shirley echoed the others and thought the healing service was number one in importance. Shirley experienced healing for herself and as a group. Norma liked interacting with Catholic members of other tribes. Going to Mission Dolores in San Francisco was another highlight. Because the old mission wasn't large enough to seat the conference attendees, Mass was held in the adjacent basilica. "The closing Mass was amazing!" Thanks Las Casas.

LeAnn Probst, OP [Peace]

National Gathering of Indigenous Sisters



Encuentro Nacional de Vida Consegrada Indigena took place last October. Sisters representing various Indigenous groups in Mexico came together. They came proudly wearing their traditional dress, each yearning to touch the deeper root of themselves. They came as they are, women with a particular culture and history hoping to live and contribute fully to the mission of religious life today, especially in Mexico. "Dance and Fiesta" was the theme.

Rumi reminds us that if you "Build a ship there will be water to float it." When we decided to host the gathering, we had nothing to start with but the conviction to support the dreams of our Indigenous sisters. Solidarity is the ship

we dared to build and indeed the water came. The commitment to be sisters with one another also served as our anchor which enabled us to dialogue about significant and unexpected challenges. We ended the gathering with a grand fiesta where strangers with different perspectives on life danced together. Joy was our dance! We all were left with: "We really matter to one another, deeply!"

Thanks Las Casas!

Helena Im, OP [Mission San Jose]



The Tekakwitha Circle held a bingo as one of their fund raisers.

Sympathy

The Las Casas Board extends sympathy to The Family and Friends of

Ann Marie McDonald
Sister of Las Casas Board Member
Kateri Mitchell, SSA
October 12, 2017

Bill Red Hat, Jr.
Bill served the last 25 years as Keeper of the Sacred Arrows for the Southern Cheyenne in Oklahoma.
April 12, 2017
He was a long-time friend of Las Casas.

May they rest in peace as they were welcomed home by the Great Spirit.



Youth Ministry and the Rally

In conversation together the youth ministers at St. Ignatius Mission in Flathead, Montana mused, "Our youth are not registering for the Junior High Rally. Normally they love the rally. Why aren't they responding this year?" Finally, after a few questions, the youth revealed the problem. Their families could not afford the registration fee and they did not have transportation to the rally which was 150 miles away.



It was at that point that the youth ministers considered the grant from Las Casas that was originally designated for the High School Youth Conference.

The parishioners always responded favorably to the youth fundraising activities for the High School Youth Conference. They knew from past experience that the conference brought benefit both to the youth and the entire parish. The youth ministers thought that maybe the high school youth could raise enough money to cover a larger portion of their costs and thus need less of the money provided by the grant. This would allow some funds to be available for the rally.

The youth ministers took the risk and offered to use a portion of the Las Casas grant to pay for the registration and travel so that junior high youth could attend the rally. When the youth were told that a grant from Dominicans would help pay for them to attend the rally, they actually jumped with joy, hugged each other, and shouted, "Really? We can attend the rally for real!"

At the rally, the youth gathered with youth from all over the diocese to learn more about their Catholic faith, pray together, dance, sing and celebrate their Catholic heritage. For youth on this reservation it was an opportunity to feel confirmed in their Catholic faith. This is important for them, for they are often challenged by other youth regarding their decision to remain faithful to the Catholic Church.

Thank you Las Casas Board and Benefactors.

Margaret Hillary, OP [Grand Rapids]

Sister Bag Blessings!

In the time line of the Las Casas ministry, the August, 1977 entry reads: "An intensive letter writing campaign was conducted by Al Broderick, OP and Regis Ryan, OP...for legal assistance to the Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribes in Northwest Oklahoma"... The journey began, and the journey continues...

What a wonderful journey this has been, and still is! Although the ministry is not as intense as it was when we were many Dominicans in Northwest Oklahoma, the children continue to come to our house after school, and on the weekends, for their "Sister Bags." This distribution was named by the children themselves and includes snacks such as peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, crackers, water, fruit, candy, jello/applesauce/pudding. The children appreciate all the snacks. One grandmother told me: "The children will never forget the Sister Bags!"



We also have books which are read to the children on our front lawn (weather permitting). I think that the children know that our home is a safe place for them, and that no matter what we are doing, when the doorbell rings, the child standing before us is the only person of our concern at the moment.

The children in the Religious Education Program at Saint Ann's Parish in Fairview, Oklahoma bring snacks for the children in Canton each Sunday,

and place the snacks on the table at the sign that reads: "We cannot do great things, only small things with great love." ~*Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta*
The parishioners of Saint Anthony's Parish in Okeene, Oklahoma give us financial assistance for the Sister Bags. The "Sister Bag" is a gift that keeps on giving.

The children never accept their "Sister Bag" snacks without saying: "Thank you and/or God bless you!" The children are the ones who come to the door asking for a snack, but I am the one who benefits from the joy and innocence of each child. I am truly blessed!

Mary Ann Cirillo, OP [Hope]

NOTE: Mary Ann has served in Canton Oklahoma since 1990. Her story among the Cheyenne and Arapaho continues as well as the "Sister Bags." Thanks, Mary Ann!

Picture: Mary Ann Cirillo, OP (Hope) & Kateri Mitchell, SSA (Las Casas Board Member) gave presentations in March, 2017 at the American Indian Catholic Outreach Evangelization Retreat entitled: "Prayer in the Four Directions." It was held at Our Lady of the Lake Retreat House in Guthrie, Oklahoma. Mary Ann had the privilege of sharing the history of the past 38 plus years of Las Casas ministry.



Thirty-four Years and Counting

A small ball of fire, Margaret (Margie) O'Doherty, OP (Sparkill) has been lighting up the lives of the Chippewa-Cree People on the Rocky Boy Reservation in Montana for the past thirty-four years. She lives in a tiny house (before they became popular) up on a hill just at the edge of town and has a small one room hermitage type dwelling next door for company or other needs. The parish church is located on the other side of town where many families use the parish center for wakes and celebrations. The town also has its medical and governmental facilities as well as a Community College.

Margie ministers at the parish in town, the location of the Agency for the Rocky Boy Reservation, and also travels to Box Elder to minister with the people there. She has provided them with leadership and formation in music and liturgical ministry for years and in the catechetical field she has worked with Kathleen Kane, OP (Sparkill) setting up the "Good Shepherd Catechesis" program for the children. It is based on the Montessori Method of learning and requires a good deal of involvement on the part of the teachers and students. Over the years, Las Casas has assisted them with grants.

The Rocky Boy Reservation was in the vicinity of wild fires this past summer. A fire had begun in the mountains on the reservation, but it changed directions and when I spoke with Margie in August it was already headed off the reservation, much to the relief of the people.

After almost three and one half decades Margie still has much creative energy, love for, and deep commitment to the people and ministry. There are no plans for moving on.

Thanks, Margie.

Interview by:

Marilyn Winter, OP [Adrian]

ANNUAL CELEBRATIONS

SAINT KATERI TEKAKWITHA FEAST DAY – JULY 14
NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH – NOVEMBER



Scholarship Program



Dominicans in ministry with Native/Indigenous People, or preparing for this ministry, may apply for a scholarship (up to \$500) to be used for:

Basic Directions for Ministry with Native Americans Institute

Annual Tekakwitha Conference

Completed applications are accepted annually and must be received by March 15th.

Applications are available on the website: www.domlife.org/lascasas

Saint Kateri Tekakwitha October 21, 2012

"Lily of the Mohawks"
Algonquin/Mohawk

Born: 1656, Ossernenon, NY
Died: April 17, 1680
Venerable: January 3, 1943
Beatified: June 22, 1980

Feast Day: July 14
Patron of the environment and ecology



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Saint Kateri Tekakwitha
Pray for us!

www.domlife.org/lascasas

Sna Gh'ul Martin de Porres

Giapas was in need of a health clinic. We decided to build one. The Mission San Jose motherhouse boutique offered us funding and we also received a Las Casas grant. A need surfaced within the parish for pastoral health care. A parcel of land was offered by a widow who said, "Land is God's."

Sharing the labor, we built a clinic in one of the villages. Every Saturday our health promoters take turns to attend to people in need. We grow more confident in the ministry as we reach out to others. Adequate and self-sustaining primary health care is our pastoral goal. We walk toward it one step at a time. Not alone. You and all our friends who are one with our Dominican mission are with us on this journey. Thank you!



Francisca Quintero Osorio, OP
[Mission San Jose]



Diane Poplawski was thanked for her years of service; blessed and gifted with a Pendleton blanket at our meeting in April 2017. Diane served on the Las Casas board since 2001. She was vice-president from fall of 2001 to fall of 2005 when she was elected president. Diane served on several

committees and guided the board through major board transitions. She oversaw the organizing of our archives at Dominican University and the rewriting of our By-Laws after the change of name and focus. Diane will continue to serve as past president.

Tekakwitha Annual Conference

July 18 – 22, 2018
Tacoma, Washington

The Tekakwitha Conference National Office

2225 North Bolton Ave. • Alexandria, LA 71303

email: tekconf@gmail.com

www.tekconf.org • 1.844.483.3900

Basic Directions
in Native American Ministry Institute
ORDINARILY JUNE OF EACH YEAR

check website to confirm dates

Sioux Spiritual Center
20100 Center Road
Howes, South Dakota 57748-7703
605.985.5906

www.rapidcitydiocese.org/basic-directions-native-ministry



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Las Casas is grateful
for the generosity of our
Financial and In-Kind Donors

July 1, 2016 through June 2017
We regret any errors or omissions.
Please report discrepancies to:
lascasasop@gmail.com

Dominican Sisters of Adrian
Dominican Sisters of Amityville
Dominican Sisters of Caldwell
Dominican Sisters of Grand Rapids
Dominican Sisters of Hope
Dominican Sisters of Houston
Dominican Sisters of Oakford
Dominican Sisters of Peace
Dominican Sisters of Racine
Dominican Sisters of San Rafael
Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa
Dominican Sisters of Springfield
Dominican Friars, St. Albert the Great Province
Dominican Friars, Western Province
Maryknoll Sister of St. Dominic
Aneesah McNamee, OP (Adrian)
Peter Paranzino
Diane Poplawski, OP (Racine)
LaVerne Poplawski
Joyce Roach, OP (Tacoma)
Sisters of St. Anne
Springfield Dominicans, St. Edward's, Chicago

In Honor of:

Adrian Dominican Jubilarians 2017
Marilyn Winter, OP
Grand Rapids Dominican Jubilarians 2017
Nathalie Meyer, OP
Mary Hourigan, OP
Dominican Sisters of Sparkill
Jeanne & Greg
Nathalie Meyer, OP (Grand Rapids)
People of Haiti
Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena
Racine Dominican Jubilarians 2017
Diane Poplawski, OP
Sinsinawa Dominican Jubilarians 2017
Mary Therese Johnson, OP

In Memory of:

Ernest Dry (Choctaw)
Shirley Dry
Bill Red Hat, Jr. (Cheyenne)
Ann Marie McDonald
Las Casas Board



Contributions to support
Las Casas and Dominicans
in ministry with
Native/Indigenous People

\$100 \$200 \$300 \$500

Other \$ _____ Anonymous

My contribution is made [please print]

In Honor of _____

In Memory of _____

Name _____

Address _____

City State, Zip _____

E-mail _____

Thank you!

Check payable to: Las Casas
Contributions are tax-deductible
to the extent allowed by law.

Mail donations to:

Las Casas
c/o Diane Poplawski, OP
5635 Erie St.
Racine, WI 53402-1900



Las Casas

c/o Diane Poplawski, OP
5635 Erie Street
Racine, WI 53402-1900

Las Casas Board

standing L-R:

Marie Michelle Hackett, OP [Springfield]

Mary Therese Johnson, OP [Sinsinawa]

Nathalie Meyer, OP [Grand Rapids]

Kateri Mitchell, SSA [Sister of St. Anne]

sitting:

Marilyn Winter [Adrian]

Diane Poplawski, OP [Racine]

LeAnn Probst, OP [Peace]



visit us at: www.domlife.org/lascasas

