

# Las Casas Newsletter

Las Casas: Dominicans in Ministry with Native Americans, Inc.  
c/o 10730 W. Cermak Rd., 1E  
Westchester, IL 60154-5234

Number 42

Fall 2010



## Letter from Las Casas Board President

### Season of the Harvest Moon

Dear Friend of Las Casas,

Greetings to you during this 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the arrival of the Order of Preachers in the Americas. What a rich tradition of presence and passion for truth and justice we are reminded of this year.

On behalf of the Board, I am pleased to share the annual Las Casas newsletter with you. We have chosen to send the newsletter out a bit later this year to help commemorate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The Las Casas Board met in April and we were able to respond to a record high of ten grant requests. In addition to responding to grants requested, donations were sent to all Dominicans who minister with Native Americans throughout the United States. This was an additional way for the Las Casas Board to honor and commemorate this special anniversary year.

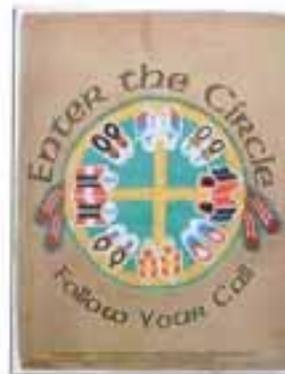
Storytelling has a long tradition among Native Americans. Some of the stories of our Dominican sisters who were awarded grants in 2009 come alive for you in this newsletter. The newsletter is also full of helpful information. Enjoy reading it and pass it on! It is also posted on our website ([www.domlife.org/lascasas](http://www.domlife.org/lascasas)).

Our Dominican sisters and brothers in Native American ministry continue to face challenges 500 years later as they minister with Native Americans throughout the United States. Las Casas is able to assist them because of the generosity of those who respond to the annual appeal. If you haven't donated in the past, please consider a donation during this 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary year. Consider a gift in honor

of a (birthday, jubilee, anniversary, etc.) or in memory of someone you know ~ it is a gift that keeps on giving! Thanks for your support, generous response and prayers.

Enjoy the harvest of the fall season. Count your blessings!

*Diane Poplawski, OP (Racine)*  
President for the *Las Casas* Board



## Reaching Out

These are challenging financial times and continue to be for Dominicans engaged in ministry with Native Americans throughout the United States.

The National Coalition for Church Vocations (NCCV) was pleased to correspond with Dominicans in Native American ministry and invite them to shop the *Vocation Resource Catalog* for free resources. It is our hope that their selections will enhance the numerous programs they are engaged in and be of benefit to them and the people they minister with. For years NCCV has been committed to developing resources that represent the cultural diversity of

the church. Native American authors and artists have assisted us with these resources. To be able to share these resources and countless others as well as respond to the numerous requests we received was a delight.

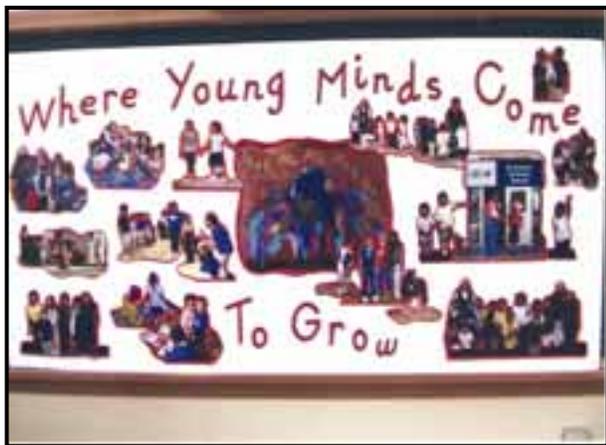
Thanks to *Las Casas* for the grant that allowed us to support our Dominican sisters and brothers. Your generosity helped us reach out, respond and give gifts that keep on giving.

*Enter the Circle, Follow Your Call* artwork kindness of *Congregation of the Great Spirit*, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Available from NCCV ([www.nccv-vocations.org](http://www.nccv-vocations.org)).  
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Diane Poplawski, OP (*Racine*)

## Where Young Minds Come to Grow

It has been with great interest and challenge that I have reached out to Eleven Chapters surrounding Gallup and visiting the homes of not only Navajo families but Native Americans from Pueblo, Plains, and Urban Native American heritage as well.



We are still currently attending Chapter Planning Meetings followed by a presentation to the General Chapter Meetings presenting our school, informing, inviting, exhibiting a large 3' by 6' visual picture display, with dis-

tribution of pertinent materials, and an invitation to come and see "Where Young Minds Come to Grow".

We are in the planning stages of collaborating with the local chapters for the presentation of "Budget Workshops" with families being presented by the public relations personnel of the local Credit Union but may need to use their health facility and collaborate with all concerned due to reassessment of the Chapters' new insurance policies. I was planning to accomplish most of this during the summer months, but the Navajo Nation moves "very slowly" so we are experiencing an on-going use of the funds throughout the year.



However, our goal for seeking the grant was Recruitment/Retention. The good news is that in May 2008 we had 33 students, May of 2009 equaled 67 students, and now presently we are 95 students. Therefore, we have increased our enrollment from 33 to 95 students in eighteen months. We are very pleased. Our over-all student enrollment is 55 percent Native American or mixed Native American/Hispanic heritage. The remainder of our student body is mostly Hispanic with a few Asian/other cultures. We are experiencing both a richness and a challenge since the first language in the home is either Native American or Spanish. We serve Pre-K through 5<sup>th</sup> grade students and their families.

Margaret Bohn, OP (*Racine*)

## THANKS, Las Casas



St. Mary in Rocky Boy and St. Anthony in Box Elder continue training for catechists in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) Religious Formation. This approach to religious formation of children, 2-12 years of age, is based on the conviction that God and the child are in relationship. The child has a deep need to experience and a special capacity to enjoy the presence of God. The curriculum accommodates and nurtures the faith, moral and psychological states of a child's growth.

Although the outcome is well worth the effort, the initial investment in providing 90 hours of certification in three levels of education is costly. Since the initiation of this Montessori Method of religious formation in our parishes six years ago, twelve catechists have completed certification in various levels. Formation leaders, Rich and Judy Main, Nancy Ayotte IHM, and Ann Garrido, author and Professor at Aquinas Institute have provided summer sessions for certification. Several catechists have been able to attend sessions in other areas of the country when those sessions were not available locally. Las Casas has helped with electronic equipment, materials and training for our catechists.

LaVerne Parker, catechist at St. Mary's Church in Rocky Boy wrote recently, *"I was always an active Catholic and I even attended a Catholic high school, but I was never taught about the love of God in the manner that is introduced by the CGS. I think I was going*

*through the motions of the Mass without really connecting the true meaning of the Eucharist and the scriptures.*

*After the Level I training, I began to have a more intimate relationship with God that I never had before. The CGS introduces children to Jesus, the Good Shepherd. The children develop a relationship with a loving God who is there to protect them. They are introduced to the Eucharist in a way that allows them to participate more fully in the celebration of Christ's life, death and resurrection. They know where Jesus lived, where he worshiped, about the apostles and they learn this through working with child-size materials that allow them to gain this intimate knowledge of Jesus and his life. I have not had Level II training and hope to continue on to Level III. It is and continues to be a wonderful journey for myself as well as the children who are participating in this program"*

LaVerne speaks for all of the catechists, children and parents whose lives have been enriched by CGS, and we are all thankful to Las Casas for helping to make this possible.

Kathleen Kane, OP (*Sparkill*)

## New Hope and New Life

There is no doubt that Montana is a beautiful state – truly "Big Sky Country", but we cannot lose sight of the fact that many Native American children struggle each day to overcome obstacles and negative cycles that often develop on our reservations. Mission Grade School is located in north central Montana on the Fort Belknap Reservation. This past year and a half has definitely been an extremely challenging one for all of our students and staff. In June of 2008, a fire totally destroyed our school we lost everything! Thanks to the support of our Tribal Council and the community in Hays, we were able to set-up temporary classrooms in town. Despite the challenges, we knew we wanted to continue exposing our students to a positive educational environment. We wanted to offer "New Hope

and New Life” to our children – thus, the name of the project that Las Casas so generously supported.

Our “New Hope/New Life” project embraced the following:

- We were able to continue our valuable three-day field trip to Bozeman, Montana.
- We began replacing the Native American books and computer software that were lost in the fire.

We are now in our new Mission Grade School and we all look forward to a future filled with much **New Hope and New Life**.

Once again, we thank Las Casas for the work you do in helping us “seek justice” in the lives of our Native American children.

Christine Ferrar, OP (*Sparkill*)

## Miggwech! ~ Thank You!

Thanks to Eugene Cahouet, OP (St. Joseph Province) who recently completed his service on the Las Casas Board. We are grateful for his dedicated commitment to Las Casas over the years and his willingness to share his leadership, vision, time and talent. His commitment to justice concerns for Native Americans has been gift. Thanks Gene!



2010 marks the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary  
of the presence of the  
Order of Preachers in the Americas!

The Las Casas Board  
gratefully acknowledges those members of the  
Order of Preachers that continue  
to minister with Native Americans today!

Please report any discrepancies to  
Barbara Bogenschutz, OP @ [sbabogie@juno.com](mailto:sbabogie@juno.com)

Carol Dulka, OP  
JoAnn Fleischaker, OP  
Mary Joyce Rybarczyk, OP  
Michael Claire Wilson, OP  
Adrian

Margaret Hillary, OP  
Mary Louise Stauder, OP  
Grand Rapids

Jean Glach, OP  
Peace

Mary Ann Cirillo, OP  
Hope

Margaret Rose Bohn, OP  
Racine

Monica Dubois, OP  
Roman Congregation

Barbara Brown, OP  
Rosalinda Soría, OP  
Sinsinawa

Barbara Bogenschutz, OP  
Springfield

Helen Regina Durso, OP  
Christine Ferrar, OP  
Laura Fucito, OP  
Mary Hourigan, OP  
Kathleen Kane, OP  
Nora McCathy, OP  
Margaret Mary O'Doherty, OP  
Sparkill

Charles Leute, OP  
St. Albert the Great Province

## Hope for the Word:

### 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Dominicans in the Americas

This is a year of jubilee! 500 years ago, in 1510, the first community of four Spanish Dominican friars responded to a call to preach the gospel in what was known as the “New World.” They arrived at Hispaniola—today, Haiti and the Dominican Republic—just 18 years after Christopher Columbus had come upon this land. In that same year the Dominican community grew to be sixteen members, under the dynamic leadership of the first provincial, Pedro de Cordoba, OP. These friars were influenced by the spirit of renewal at Salamanca, Spain. Today this 500th anniversary is reason for all Dominicans to celebrate the commitment to defend the rights of the indigenous of the Americas. From the very beginning, Dominicans stood in solidarity with the Native peoples, giving witness to the truth that the dignity of each person must be respected.



At the same time of the arrival of the Dominicans, Franciscans and secular priests came from Spain as agents of the Spanish crown. Among the secular priests was Bartolome de las Casas. Though not a Dominican at the time, he was present in the “New World” 500 years ago. The bold Dominican community preached the Gospel and gave witness to justice

when other Spanish priests were oppressing the Indigenous people. However, our namesake, Bartolome de las Casas underwent a conversion like Paul of Tarsus. Las Casas, a Spanish diocesan priest who owned land and slaves in Hispaniola, was transformed by the courageous preaching of Antonio de Montesinos, OP in Advent of 1511. Inspired by the preaching and the witness of the Dominican Community, Las

Casas no longer espoused the power of the Spanish crown. He became a Dominican friar and dedicated his entire life to ministering with the oppressed in the Americas.

Las Casas, his preaching, his writings, and his life made a profound impact in our “New World.” Set on fire by truth in his conversational Pentecost preaching in 1214, he became “a zealous and virtuous friar.” Repeatedly he defended the rights of the indigenous peoples and denounced the oppression that was endorsed by the Spanish ‘conquerors.’ Las Casas wrote a *History of the Indies* and a treatise entitled *De Unico Vocationis Modo/The Only Way*. His written works and his life expressed his dream, his mission: to preach a nonviolent and peaceful evangelization in these indigenous territories, among these human beings who had been scarred by the presence of the Spanish soldiers.

Las Casas, with the other Dominicans made a significant difference in the Americas. They united in communal preaching. They engaged in, what we call today theological reflection, with the Dominicans in Salamanca, Spain. These friars were visionaries. They approached their mission in the “New World” together through contemplation, study and work with the Native people. Their preaching was prophetic and impacted the whole Christian world.

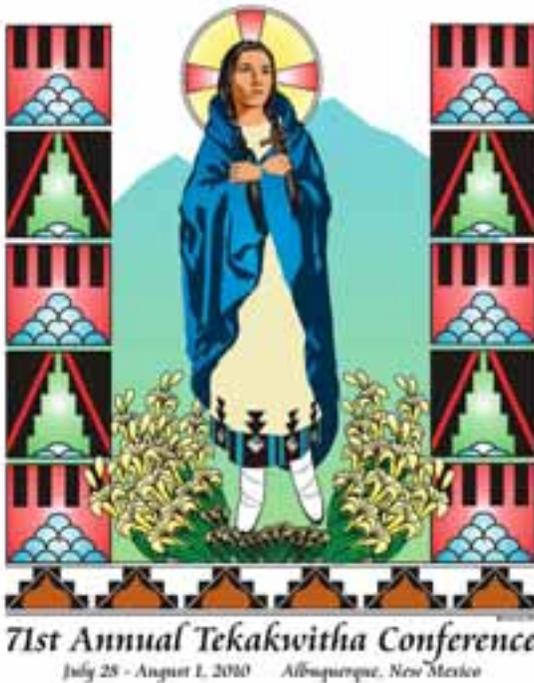
In this year of jubilee, the Las Casas board decided to celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary by donating funds to all Dominicans who minister with Native Americans. Through generous donors Las Casas is able to provide support to our Brothers and Sisters.

United in spirit with the early Dominican community may we always have zeal for the gospel of justice and be a source of hope for the oppressed in our midst.

Mary Therese Johnson, OP (*Sinsinawa*)

*The art sculpture is Friar Antonio de Montesinos who was part of the first band of Dominicans to arrive in 1510 on the island of Hispaniola (Dominican Republic and Haiti). This towering statue of de Montesinos faces the Caribbean Sea and represents the passionate sermon preached in 1511 challenging the abuses of the Indigenous people. It stands today as a reminder of the continued struggle for justice for Indigenous people.*

## *Walk in Beauty with Kateri in the Land of Enchantment*



## **An Experience to Treasure**

To honor and celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the presence of Dominicans in the Americas, the Las Casas Board chose a representative to attend the 71<sup>st</sup> Annual Tekakwitha Conference. Being this representative was an honor for me and a dream come true.

Some years back I worked twelve summers with the Oneida children in Oneida, WI. During those summers I learned of the love and respect the Native American communities have for all creation and its beauty. This was expressed in their words, actions, drumming and dancing – their way of life. That beauty was evident in the conference amidst the presentations and liturgies.

With over 700 attending, 147 tribes were represented from 35 states and five Canadian provinces. The opening ceremony included the Grand Entry, the procession of representatives of all the tribes. Most of the conference presenters were Native Americans. Topics ranged from culture, spirituality, liturgy,

Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, family life, respect for earth, to special sessions for the youth.

The closing day included a report by Kateri Michell, SSA, Director of the Tekakwitha Conference. In addition to a closing liturgy and dinner, participants were treated to dancing and drumming.

My thanks to the Las Casas board for gifting me with this opportunity to attend the Conference.

Charlotte Rebbe, OP (*Springfield*)

**Please join the Catholic Native American communities across the country in praying for Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha's cause for sainthood. She would be the first Native American saint and approval of her cause would be a welcome acknowledgement for the Native American community and the church.**



### ***Prayer for the Canonization of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha***

*O God, who, among the many marvels of Your Grace in the New World, did cause to blossom on the banks of the Mohawk and of the St. Lawrence, the pure and tender Lily, Kateri Tekakwitha, grant we beseech You, the favor we beg through her intercession; that this Young Lover of Jesus and of His Cross may soon be counted among the Saints by Holy Mother Church, and that our hearts may be enkindled with a stronger desire to imitate her innocence and faith. Through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.*

**Las Casas is grateful  
for the generosity of our Donors**

May 1, 2009 through June, 2010  
We regret any errors or omissions.  
Please report discrepancies to  
[lascasasop@gmail.com](mailto:lascasasop@gmail.com)

Dominican Sisters of Adrian  
Dominican Sisters of Amityville  
Dominican Sisters of Blauvelt  
Dominican Sisters of Caldwell  
Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine de Ricci  
Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena,  
Taos *In Memory of Patricia Callan, OP*  
Dominican Sisters of Grand Rapids  
Dominican Sisters of Houston  
Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose  
Dominican Sisters of Peace  
Dominican Friars, Province of St. Joseph  
Dominican Sisters of Racine  
Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa  
Dominican Sisters of Springfield  
Dominican Sisters of Tacoma  
Barbara McCarthy, OP (Hope) *In Memory of  
Regis Ryan, OP*  
Claire Bogenschutz *In Memory of Art Bogenschutz & Honor of Barbara Bogenschutz  
(Springfield)*  
Dominican Cloistered Nuns, Monastery of the  
Blessed Sacrament  
Diane Poplawski, OP *In Honor of Dominican  
Sisters of Racine 2010 Jubilarians*  
Frye-Williamson Press  
Las Casas Board *In Memory of Ginni Johnson  
Wold*  
Province of Western Dominicans  
(Rev. John R. Morris, OP)

**Contribution to support  
Las Casas and Dominicans  
who serve in Native American Ministry  
across the United States are welcome.**

\$100    \$200    \$300    \$500  
 Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_    Anonymous

My contribution is made (please print):

In Honor of \_\_\_\_\_

In Memory of \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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  
10730 W. Cermak Rd., 1E  
Westchester, IL 60154-5234

[www.domlife.org/lascasas](http://www.domlife.org/lascasas)



## Board Members

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Mary Therese Johnson, OP (*Sinsinawa*)

Kateri Mitchell, SSA (*Sister of St. Ann*)

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