

Las Casas Newsletter

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



Number 44

Fall 2012

Letter from Las Casas Board President

Month of the Full Harvest Moon, September

Dear Friend of Las Casas,

We rejoice at the long anticipated news of the approval of the canonization of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha that will take place in Rome on October 21, 2012. Over the years we have invited you to join us in praying for Kateri's canonization. "*Wopila tanka*" ("many thanks" in Lakota). Prayers have surely been answered and this is *good news* that is welcomed by Native Peoples and countless others who have prayed for and hoped for this day! Kateri will become the first Native American to be canonized. For more information visit the Tekakwitha Conference website (www.tekconf.org).

The Las Casas Board met in May and approved all grant requests. This past year we initiated a scholarship program to assist Dominicans who minister with or are preparing for ministry with Native Americans in the U.S. Funds are available for educational programs at the Sioux Spiritual Center and/or the Tekakwitha Conference. Due to the response and need, the Board voted to continue the program. Scholarship information for 2012-13 was sent to the leadership members of the Dominican Sisters Conference.

Storytelling has a long tradition among Native Americans. The newsletter contains some of the stories of the 2011 grant recipients as well as other noteworthy stories and helpful information. Enjoy reading it and pass it on! It will also be posted on our website (www.domlife.org/lascasas).

Las Casas is able to provide financial grants and scholarships to our Dominican sisters and brothers because of the generosity of those who respond to the annual appeal. If you haven't donated in the past, please consider a donation this year. Consider a gift in honor (jubilee, anniversary, birthday, etc.) or memory of someone you know ~ it is a gift that keeps on giving! Thanks for your support, generous response and prayers.

Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, pray for us!

Diane Poplawski, OP (Racine)

President for the Las Casas Board



Jacob Finkbonner and Sr. Kateri Mitchell, SSA

The First Class Miracle Attributed to Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha

At the end of February 2006, I received a phone call from Sister Julie Codd, a Sister of St. Joseph of Peace from Seattle, Washington. She asked me to send an electronic message (teknews) to all

Tekakwitha Conference members, Kateri Circles and their members to pray for a miracle through the intercession of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha. A five year old boy, a member of the Lummi Tribe from Ferndale, Washington, fell and cut his lip on a pipe which developed into a flesh eating infection and became life threatening. He was not expected to survive.

A few days after Sister Julie's call she called again to ask if I had a first class relic of Blessed Kateri, A family member had requested someone with a first class relic come to the hospital and pray for a little native boy named Jacob (Jake) Finkbonner. I informed her that I had a first class relic of Blessed Kateri which was blessed at the time of her beatification by Pope John Paul II (June 1980, St. Peter's, Rome). I was asked if I could travel to Seattle as soon as possible. In fact, I was going to Seattle within a week for a meeting with planners for the July 2006 Tekakwitha Conference which was to be in Seattle. When Sister Julie and I entered Seattle's Children's Hospital, I asked her to accompany me into Jake's room. Upon entering the room, Jake's father and mother were present, one on each side of his bed. Jacob's mother asked me if I had the relic. I had it in the palm of my hand and she asked me to place it on his body. Seeing him all wrapped in white, I asked her to take the relic and place it on her son. She was hesitant. I asked her if she would accept the relic if I placed it in the palm of her hand, I would then place my palm over her hand, and we would both place the relic on her son's body. We then prayed spontaneously for her son. When asked to pray with/for someone, I bring prayer cards for a first class miracle leading to the canonization of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha. We ended this brief visit and prayer with the prayer for Blessed Kateri's canonization. As Sister Julie and I walked out of the room, doctors were already waiting at the door for another

procedure on his face. I proceeded to the meeting with the 2006 Planning Committee. Months passed. I was then asked to write about my visit and prayer in Jacob Finkbonner's hospital room in early March. I was informed that this documentation would be added to others that were being prepared to be presented for the investigation which was in process. The prayer, through the intercession of Blessed Kateri's relic that March Saturday afternoon in Jake Finkbonner's room, might possibly be the first class miracle required for sainthood of our Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha. I was held to secrecy from that time until the first class miracle was approved by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI on December 19, 2011. Communication was only with the U.S. Vice Postulator, Monsignor Paul Lenz who would contact me about his conversations with Father Molinari, SJ, the Postulator for the cause of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha in Rome.

In 2007, I was asked to travel to Bellingham, Washington to appear before a tribunal and tell my story. The account of the events of that March 2006 visit in the Seattle Children's Hospital was recorded and I in turn was questioned about the contents of the document I had initially submitted about a year prior. It was a bit of a surprise to me that I did not know and was not to find out who the others were who were brought before the tribunal that day. I was escorted in and out of the building and did not see anyone who might be present to testify.

In early November 2011, I learned the process of Kateri's canonization was very close to possible approval by our Holy Father. We would probably know his decision by mid-December, 2011. The long awaited words of approval came the morning of December 19, 2011 by Pope Benedict XVI. The Catholic Indigenous world here in North America has never been the same. So much excitement and

jubilant spread across this land known as **Turtle Island**. Plans began immediately for pilgrimages to Rome. When? We still needed to wait for the Pope to announce the date. February 18, 2012 the Pope announced that October 21, 2012 was the date for Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha's canonization in Rome. She would be canonized along with six other Blesseds.

During our 73rd Annual Tekakwitha Conference in Albany, New York, I had a face to face meeting with Jacob (Jake) Finkbonner for the first time since that hospital visit when I only saw a little body wrapped in white lying on a bed. It was an emotional encounter. We hugged one another and it was like seeing a "long lost friend." Each time we would see each other during the conference there was a very strong non-verbal connection as we greeted one another with a wave and/or a smile from a distance. I referred to Jake as my new friend.

I am touched as I reflect on the marvelous wonders of our Creator God whose plan was unfolding. Our God chose two young Indigenous people – Kateri Tekakwitha whose face was left scarred from the smallpox disease, which was also life-threatening. She survived with pock marks on her face and poor eyesight. Jacob (Jake) Finkbonner, also with a life threatening disease, a flesh eating infection which left scars and a need for corrective lenses. God's chosen ones indeed show us today, in contemporary society, that miracles can and do happen when we have faith. God continues to work wonders and marvels in our lives. Yes, God truly "hears the cry of the poor."

*Sister Kateri Mitchell, SSA
July 2012*

The Las Casas Board is grateful to Sister Kateri Mitchell, SSA for sharing her first-hand experience of the journey to sainthood for Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha.

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 & ecology



Artwork © Tisket. Used with permission
Tekakwitha Conference ~ www.tekconf.org

The Las Casas Board celebrates with Native Americans and all who have anticipated the canonization of the first Native American ~ St. Kateri Tekakwitha!

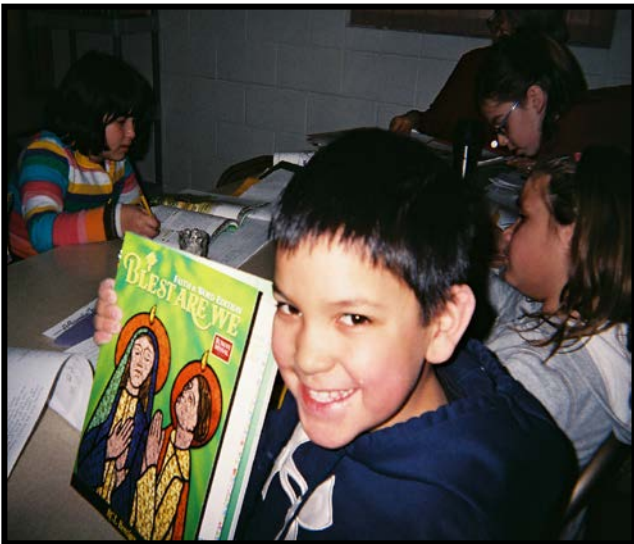
Marilyn Winter, OP (Adrian), Las Casas Board member, will represent the Las Casas Board at the canonization in Rome on October 21, 2012.

She will assist Kateri Mitchell, SSA (Executive Director of the Tekakwitha Conference & Las Casas Board Member) with the canonization celebrations.

***Saint Kateri Tekakwitha
Pray for us!***

Story of the Children of the Flathead Reservation

Thanks to the Las Casas grant for the year 2011 the children of Sacred Heart Mission in Arlee and Saint John Berchman/Jocko, Montana are now studying from religion books that reflect our current period of history. They treasure these shiny, bright, new religion books, not only because of their beauty, but also because they can comprehend the religious messages which are present in an age-appropriate manner. The children give evidence of their learning for they are able to express the truths being taught and explain how they can live each day as a follower of Christ. The Las Casas grant made possible the purchase of RCL Benzinger religion books for each child in our grades 1-6 religion program and the catechists' manuals for each level.



The children love coming to release time religious education once a week. It warmed my heart to hear them say that they were sorry the sessions for the year were coming to an end. Another way that I know they like their religious education time is that their classmates in the public school ask me questions about religious release and express a desire to come with us to religion class. It is clear that our

children are telling their friends about their religion classes and sharing their joy.

Our parish appreciates Las Casas for making it possible for us to replace religion books, some of which were 20 years old. All of us are grateful to those who support Las Casas and its mission to affirm and promote Native American self-determination and the freedom of Native Americans to express their culture, language and religion.

Margaret Hillary, OP (Grand Rapids)

The Flathead Indian Reservation is now the residence of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. The tribes have formed one united government which works to improve the lives of the people living on the reservation. Through their spirit of collaboration, consultation, and community, the tribal leaders work together to bring about the goods and resources needed by their people. They are an inspiration to me and teach me how to live the values contained in the rich social teachings of the Catholic Church.

Dreaming on the Reservation

The Northern Cheyenne Ministerial Association began in 1987 with three pastors from the Northern Cheyenne Indian reservation in Montana. Since then, the NCMA has met monthly during the school year. The association has grown to about 14 members representing 11 reservation churches.

The NCMA had talked about establishing a thrift store in Lame Deer. The high unemployment rate and poverty on the reservation support the need for a store. Some employment through the store and opportunities for local volunteers to earn work points for food/gas vouchers would be possible.

In October 2009, the NCMA formulated a vision statement: ***“Reflecting God’s love for all, in Christ Jesus we seek to***

serve our neighbor's needs, protecting each one's dignity."



Inquiries about possible buildings and sites for the store were made. Work began on acquiring 501c3 status for the association. In October a board was selected. By-laws for the corporation were approved in November. Approval of the 501c3 application was received in January 2011.

Services of a professional grant writer were sought. Vern Turner, manager of the Rescue Mission Bargain Centers in Billings agreed to provide an internship for the manager of the Lane Deer Store. A grant was received to cover the cost of this training, thanks to Las Casas.

The Collaborative Design Architectural Firm of Billings has prepared "a per forma" for construction of the thrift store.

We are appreciative of the help received from Las Casas to make this dream a reality.

LeAnn Probst, OP (Peace)

Project Healthy Mind --Healthy Body

Mission Grade School is located in the southern corner of the Fort Belknap Reservation in the small town of Hays. Fort Belknap is home to the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine tribes and is located in north central Montana.

Over the past three and a half years, we have experienced a fair amount of challenging events. In June of 2008, our school burned down; the building and its contents were a complete loss. Our Mission family "stuck together" as the funding was put into place to rebuild the school. From the "ashes," a miracle truly occurred and in January 2010 we moved into our new school. Through the grace of God and the prayers and generosity of so many people, we are "up and running" again. We continue to challenge young minds, celebrate our Catholic faith, and embrace the Native American culture.

Last year, with the help of Las Casas, we initiated Project Healthy Mind/Healthy Body. Since we are located in an extremely rural area, we realized that our students needed to be exposed to accurate and up-to-date information. We were grateful for several used computers that were given to us, but we knew that these needed to be upgraded.



The second part of our project addressed the obesity and diabetes that is so prevalent on our reservations. Since the fire in 2008, the children had been without a playground. This past fall, the ground next to the new school was leveled and much of the playground equipment was brought over from the old school. You

can imagine how excited the children were the first day they were able to run out and use their very own playground!

Once again, thank you, Las Casas, for the work you do in helping us break many of the negative cycles that often develop on our reservations.

Chris Ferrar, OP (Sparkill)

McGreal Center Welcomes Las Casas



Janet Welsh, OP, Diane Poplawski, OP, and Mary Therese Johnson, OP (l – r) depositing some of the Las Casas archives at the McGreal Center and presenting Janet with a Las Casas briefcase.

During this past year, Las Casas Board members, Mary Therese Johnson, OP and Diane Poplawski, OP have been collaborating with Janet Welsh, OP (Sinsinawa) to transfer the Las Casas archives to the McGreal Center for Dominican Historical Studies. The McGreal Center is located on the campus of Dominican University, River Forest, Illinois.

Archivist Rebecca Dampitz, Chad Commello (graduate student from the School of Library Information and Science), and Director Janet Welsh, OP have warmly welcomed us and the Las Casas collection. Over the years the Las Casas archives have been in New York, Oklahoma, Illinois, Wisconsin and have finally come home to the McGreal Center.



Chad Commello reviewing Las Casas archives

Thanks to Rebecca, Chad and Janet for their expertise in providing the best archival practices available for Las Casas. The Mission of the McGreal Center is to provide access to materials for scholars and students researching the history of the Dominican Family. Las Casas is grateful to the staff of the McGreal Center and we welcome the ways we are able to continue to collaborate with and support the mission of the McGreal Center.

Stop by the Las Casas Booth
Dominican Sisters Conference
October 4-7, 2012!



Grant Helps Enhance Ministry

Thanks to a Las Casas grant, we were able to purchase a computer, computer programs and a digital camera. This new technology has benefitted our programs, presentations for elementary, high school and vacation bible school classes at St. Ignatius and Sacred Heart parishes. The diocese has provided materials.



The digital camera has helped us create presentations, take pictures of various activities and introduce First Eucharist, Confirmation and RCIA candidates to the parish. We have also been able to take family pictures with their newly baptized. These are posted at the church entrance so all will know and welcome the newest members of our faith community. The camera has also helped us create a parish Christmas card for donors. In the near future, we hope to take family pictures to help new parishioners get to know one another.

Without the help of the Las Casas grant we would not have been able to purchase a computer or camera. The grant also generated a contribution by another donor for a projector. Thanks, Las Casas!

Mary Louise Stauder, OP (Grand Rapids)

Native American Tribes in Ministry with Dominicans

Acoma
Gros Ventre
Assiniboine
Spirit Lake Dakotah
Salish
Kootenai
Pend d'Oreilles
Assiniboine Sioux
Chippewa
Cree
Navajo
Mescalero Apache
Zuni
Cheyenne
Arapaho
Hopi
Laguna
Apache
Oglala Sioux
Confederation Salish
Coeur d'Alene
Northern Cheyenne

Tekakwitha Conference News

Future Annual Conference Dates MARK YOUR CALENDARS

2013 – July 17-21, El Paso, Texas
2014 – 75th Anniversary, July 23-27
Fargo, North Dakota

Tekakwitha Conference Workshops

Basic Directions Workshop
Sioux Spiritual Center
June 17-24, 2013

Las Casas is grateful For the generosity of our Donors

July 1, 2011 through June 2012
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 Peace
 Dominican Sisters of Racine
 Dominican Sisters of San Rafael
 Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa
 Dominican Sisters of Sparkill
 Dominican Sisters of Springfield
 Dominican Sisters of Tacoma
 Dominican Friars, Province of St. Joseph
 Dominican Friars, Province of the Most Holy
 Name of Jesus
 Sisters of St. Ann
 Frye-Williamson Press
 Mary Therese Johnson, OP (Sinsinawa) *in honor of Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa 2011 and 2012 Jubilarians*
 Claire Bogenschutz *in memory of Art Bogenschutz and in honor of Barb Bogenschutz, OP (Springfield)*
 Dick and LaVerne Poplawski
 Diane Poplawski, OP (Racine) *in honor of Dominican Sisters of Racine 2012 Jubilarians*
 Annette Roach, OP and Claire Sinotte, OP (Hope) *in honor of Dominican Sisters of Hope 2012 Jubilarians*
Las Casas Board in Memory of:
 ~Board Member, Laura Fucito, OP (Sparkill)
 ~Board Member, Nancy Crane, OP (Akron/Peace)
 ~Board Members, Eugene Cahouet, OP, Joseph Payne, OP and Las Casas Volunteer Val LaFrance, OP (Dominican Friars, Province of St. Joseph)
 ~Virgel "Bud" Winter, Father of Marilyn Winter, OP (Adrian)
 ~Claire Bogenschutz, Mother of Barbara Bogenschutz, OP (Springfield)

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 _____

E-mail address _____

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



Sympathy

The Las Casas Board
extends sympathy to

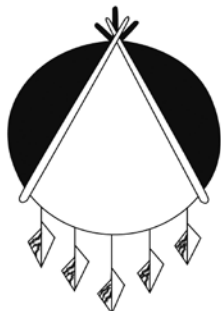
The Dominican Sisters of Sparkill,
at the death of
Las Casas Board Member
and long-time minister
among Native Americans,
Laura Fucito, OP

The Dominican Friars,
St. Joseph Province,
at the deaths of Las Board Members
Eugene Cahouet, OP, Joseph Payne, OP
and Las Casas volunteer
Val LaFrance, OP

The Dominican Sisters of Akron/Peace,
at the death of
Las Casas Board Member
Nancy Crane, OP

Barbara Bogenschutz, OP (Springfield)
and her family at the death of
their mother, Claire

***May they rest in peace as they are
welcomed home
by the Great Spirit!***



Dominicans Ministering with Native Americans

Margaret Bohn, OP (Racine)
Barbara Bogenschutz, OP (Springfield)
Mary Ann Cirillo, OP (Hope)
Monica Dubois, OP (Dominican Sisters
of the Roman Congregation)
Helen Durso, OP (Sparkill)
Christine Ferrar, OP (Sparkill)
Jo Ann Fleischaker, OP (Adrian)
Jean Glach, OP (Great Bend)
Margaret Hillary, OP (Grand Rapids)
Mary Hourigan, OP (Sparkill)
Kathleen Kane, OP (Sparkill)
Charles Leute, OP
(St. Albert the Great Province)
Nora McCarthy, OP (Sparkill)
Margaret Mary O'Doherty, OP (Sparkill)
LeAnn Probst, OP (Peace)
Rosalinda Soria, OP (Sinsinawa)
Mary Louise Stauder, OP (Grand Rapids)



Las Casas Board

Back: l to r:

Marilyn Winter, OP (*Adrian*)

Diane Poplawski, OP (*Racine*)

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

Front: l to r:

Mary Therese Johnson, OP (*Sinsinawa*)

Charlotte Rebbe, OP (*Springfield*)

Barbara Bogenschutz, OP (*Springfield*)



WEBSITE

www.domlife.org/lascasas

Las Casas Newsletter

c/o 10730 W. Cermak Rd., 1W

Westchester, IL 60154-5234