



Season of the Harvest Moon

Dear Friend of Las Casas,

This past year we celebrated the canonization of the first Native American saint, Saint Kateri Tekakwitha! The Las Casas Board is grateful to board members Marilyn Winter, OP (Adrian) and Kateri Mitchell, SSA (Sister of St. Anne & Executive Director of the Tekakwitha Conference) who planned and participated in the celebration and represented the Las Casas Board in Rome. Kateri and Marilyn were in the procession carrying in the Kateri Tekakwitha relic. A new DVD entitled: In Her Footsteps: The Story of Kateri Tekakwitha features the most up-to-date story of St. Kateri and excerpts of the celebration of her canonization. It is available from the Tekakwitha Conference (tekconf.org). This resource would be a great addition for anyone in ministry.

The Las Casas Board met in May and we were able to respond to all grant requests. We also continue to designate scholarship funds for Dominicans who minister with Native Americans or are preparing for this ministry in the United States.

The Tekakwitha Conference will celebrate 75 years in 2014

The newsletter contains some of the stories of last year's grant recipients. Other stories and helpful information are also noted. Enjoy reading it and pass it on. It will also be posted on our website (www.domlife.org/lascasas).



The Tekakwitha Conference will celebrate 75 years in 2014. The conference will be in Fargo North Dakota. If you haven't attended a conference in a while, you may want to consider joining in this anniversary year conference.

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

St. Kateri, pray for us!

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



Dream Fulfilled

Three plus years of discussion and planning by the Northern Cheyenne Ministerial Association resulted in the opening of the *Everything Beautiful Thrift Store* on the Northern Cheyenne reservation in Lame Deer, Montana. The NCMA is comprised of members from eleven reservation churches. The store is located in an old school building on the grounds of the Baptist Church. Clothing, bedding, books, and small kitchen appliances are among the items for sale at discounted prices.

The store employs a manager and all other workers are volunteers. People really appreciate not having to drive a hundred miles to Billings to do their shopping and enjoy dealing with the local people for their needs. During the summer wildfires which raged around Lame Deer, free items were distributed to families who lost their homes. It meant a lot to have items locally available to give to the people in need.

This ecumenical endeavor has brought blessings to our reservation and helped to bond us in our mission. Thanks to Las Casas for your support in helping to fulfill this dream.

LeAnn Probst, OP [Peace]



Board members at opening prayer service: l-r: Dean Smith, Baptist pastor; LeAnn Probst, OP; Doug Jessen, Assembly of God pastor; Dennis Bauer, Lutheran pastor; Suzette Cain, manager; Willis Busenitz, Mennonite pastor; Deacon Joe Kristufek, Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church parish life coordinator.



A Welcoming Spirit

Since June of 2008, when our school burned down, our Mission family in Hays, Montana has experienced a fair amount of challenging “ups and downs.” Through the grace of God and the prayers and generosity of many people, we are “up and running” again. We continue to challenge young minds, celebrate our Catholic faith, and embrace the Native American culture.

Thanks to **Las Casas**, we were able to extend our most recent project to the outside of the school. The outside of anything is often an indication of what lies within. We now have a wonderful Mission Grade School sign in front of the school. It is a sign that lets parents and the community know that they are always welcome. Bushes and flowers will be planted around the sign and in front of the school when the snows melt and spring arrives. We know that the additional positive appearance of our school is, and will continue to be, a source of pride for everyone. Thanks to Las Casas for the work you do in helping us to “seek justice” and improve situations in the lives of our Native American children.

Christine Ferrar, OP [Sparkill]



A Journey of Faith

Thanks to a Las Casas grant some funds were made available to assist one of our parish families to attend the 2012 Tekakwitha Conference which was held in New York. The canonization of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha had been announced and among the highlights of the Conference were visits to the major sites of Kateri's life. This provided a unique opportunity to gain insights into the life of the woman who was to become the first Native American saint, walk in her footsteps and be inspired by her life.

The conference did more than inspire the family. It motivated them to sacrifice and save so they could travel to Rome for the canonization. A 17-year old son recognized the importance of this historic event and encouraged his family to make the pilgrimage to Rome.

When they returned from the canonization, they shared their story of how the canonization of an Algonquin/Mohawk woman was the culmination of their faith journey back to trust in and acceptance of the Catholic Church.

I felt that I truly belonged to the church and the church accepted and affirmed me as a Native person.

Our journey to the canonization began 20 years ago when as a young college student I studied the history of Native Americans. I learned of the atrocities committed against our people in the name of Christianity. I could not continue participating with the Christian community and left the Church. This separation from the Church of my youth and anything religious continued for years until we experienced some family concerns. I tried all of the advice contained in popular parenting books. Finally when I had reached rock bottom, I turned to Scripture. I read about the real God and Jesus Christ. I began to separate the actions of some people from the love and care that God has for all people.



The journey back to the Catholic Church came full circle when I stood in St. Peter's Plaza and witnessed the proclamation that a young Native American woman was raised to the highest honor the church can bestow on one of its members. I felt that I truly belonged to the church and the church accepted and affirmed me as a Native person.

Others in the Kateri Circle shared similar experiences and affirmed how the canonization of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha has brought a sense of healing, acceptance, affirmation and belonging to Native Americans.

If the family had not had the assistance of the Las Casas grant and also received a financial settlement from the U.S. government as a member of the Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribes, they would not have been able to attend the Tekakwitha Conference. Thanks to Las Casas and their donors for their generosity and making the grant possible.

St. Kateri Tekakwitha, pray for us!

Margaret Hillary, OP [Grand Rapids]



Canonization of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha October 21, 2012 Rome

As a representative of the Las Casas Board of Directors I (Marilyn Winter, OP, Adrian) had the privilege and rare opportunity to participate in the canonization ceremony for St. Kateri Tekakwitha, known as "Lily of the Mohawks". A delegation of over seven hundred formed the official pilgrimage and were joined by smaller groups arranged by individual dioceses across the country and many hundreds more from Canada. We were welcomed at a reception in the Vatican garden area hosted by the United States Embassy and Ambassador Diaz. It was gratifying to see how the government welcomed our group and honored the two women from the States

who were being canonized (Sister Marianne Cope was the other woman).

The experience of the canonization of Kateri was like no other. Kateri Mitchell, SSA, Executive Director of the Tekakwitha Conference and Las Casas Board Member, and

I arrived in the pitch dark of a Roman morning, October 21, 2012. We joined thousands of others already gathering in the square. We went directly to the entrance of the Holy Office where we were swallowed in a sea of others; cardinals, bishops, priests, our Native American choir members, all waiting for the entrance to open.

Finally the gate opened and we were directed around the rear of St. Peter's to a side entrance to find our place and go through a final practice. Our small choir with flute and drum accompaniment

sang three songs in the Mohawk language before the ceremony began. During the ceremony Kateri Mitchell, SSA presented the relic of St. Kateri (encased in a large glass frame with two brass medallions depicting Kateri with the date on one and the turtle {her clan} along with images of corn, squash and beans {the three sisters} on the other). I walked with her carrying a candle to place on the relic table. It was an historic and moving ceremony as we celebrated the decades of waiting and praying for this moment.

The following day, we returned to St. Peter's and celebrated the Mass of Thanksgiving. People presented personal gifts as well as the official gifts of a beaded cross, handmade stole and handmade plate and cup from the Tekakwitha Conference. Thanks to all the Dominicans who joined us in spirit and prayer!

Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, pray for us!
Marilyn Winter, OP [Adrian]

image: CNS/Paul Haring
Sister Kateri Mitchell, SSA (Mohawk Nation) carries a relic of St. Kateri Tekakwitha during the canonization of Saint Kateri in St. Peter's Square, October 21, 2012.



Thanks! Wopila! Tanka! many thanks in Lakota

The Las Casas Board met in Westchester, Illinois in Spring and gathered in prayer to thank Charlotte Rebbe, OP [Springfield] for her service on the board. Charlotte served as secretary and coordinated the annual newsletter.



L-R: Charlotte Rebbe, OP, Marilyn Winter, OP, and Kateri Mitchell, SSA



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
Canonization: October 21, 2012

Feast Day: July 14
Patron of the environment and ecology



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Tekakwitha Conference
www.tekconf.org

Saint Kateri Tekakwitha
Pray for us!

www.domlife.org/lascasas

In Memory of Laura Fucito, OP

Sparkill

Annually the Las Casas Board responds to grant requests from Dominicans in ministry with Native Americans. In gratitude for the life and service of Laura Fucito, OP, a grant was given to Native Americans (Gros Ventre/Assiniboine) that Laura ministered with in Lodge Pole, Montana. This will allow them to attend the Tekakwitha Conference's 75th Anniversary year gathering in 2014. Laura served on the Las Casas Board and ministered with Native Americans for 36 years! Her spirit continues to live among the people with whom she ministered with in Montana.

Thanks, Laura!



Tekakwitha Conference News
Annual Conference Dates - 75th Anniversary - MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

July 23- 27, 2014

Fargo, North Dakota

Ramada Plaza & Suites and Conference Center
701.277.9000

Tekakwitha Conference Workshops

Basic Directions Workshop
Sioux Spiritual Center • June 16-23, 2014

The Tekakwitha Conference National Office is MOVING!

New Address as of November 1, 2013
Tekakwitha Conference • 2225 North Bolton Ave. • Alexandria, LA 71301
email: tekconf@gmail.com
www.tekconf.org
phone numbers: TBA



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Sympathy

The Las Casas Board extends sympathy to

Board member Diane Poplawski, OP (Racine) and her family at the death of their father, Richard "Dick" Poplawski on September 5, 2013 at the age of 92.

The Family and Friends of Rev. Joseph W. Burger Diocese of Oklahoma City and Tulsa Father Burger was the 1991 recipient of the Las Casas Award in Canton Oklahoma in recognition of his advocacy for the Cheyenne and Arapaho people. Father Burger invited the Dominicans to come to Oklahoma and to consider helping with legal assistance and representation. LEAPCAT began as a result of his invitation.

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



The DVD *"In Her Footsteps: The Story of Kateri Tekakwitha"* is a remarkable documentary and shares the historical and contemporary story of Kateri's journey to sainthood. Numerous contemporary people are interviewed and share their insights. Kateri Mitchell, SSA (Sister of St. Anne) who serves on the Las Casas board and is the executive director of the Tekakwitha Conference is among those interviewed. Jake Finkbonner who received the miraculous healing that led to Kateri's canonization is also on the DVD. The



2012 Tekakwitha Conference is highlighted along with excerpts from the Mass of Canonization of St. Kateri Tekakwitha, the Mass of Thanksgiving in Rome and several other features.

It tells a moving and inspirational story. It is available from the Tekakwitha Conference (tekconf@gmail.com).



Dominicans Minister with the following Native American Tribes

Gros Ventre
Assiniboine
Spirit Lake Dakotah
Chippewa-Cree
Navajo
Pueblo of Zuni
Cheyenne
Arapaho
Oglala Sioux
Confederated Salish Kootenai
Northern Cheyenne



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

July 1, 2012 through June 2013
We regret any errors or omissions.
Please report discrepancies to
lascasasop@gmail.com

Dominican Sisters of Adrian
Dominican Sisters of Amityville
Dominican Sisters Conference
Dominican Sisters of Hope
Dominican Sisters of Houston
Dominican Sisters of Oakford, U.S. Region
Dominican Sisters of Peace
Dominican Sisters of Racine
Dominican Sisters of San Rafael
Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa
Dominican Sisters of Sparkill
in memory of Laura Fucito, OP (Sparkill)
Dominican Sisters of Springfield
Dominican Sisters of Tacoma
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Dominican Sisters of Racine 2013 Jubilarians*
Marilyn Winter, OP (Adrian) *in honor of
Dominican Sisters of Adrian 2013 Jubilarians*

Las Casas Board in Memory of Rev. Joseph Burger

Contributions 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 _____

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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 Newsletter
c/o 10730 W. Cermak Rd., 1W
Westchester, IL 60154-5234

Las Casas Board

L-R:

Kateri Mitchell, SSA (Sister of St. Anne)
Barbara Bogenschutz, OP (Springfield)
Mary Therese Johnson, OP (Sinsinawa)
Diane Poplawski, OP (Racine)
Marilyn Winter, OP (Adrian)



visit us at: www.domlife.org/lascas

