

# Las Casas Newsletter

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

Number 41

Spring 2009



## Letter from Las Casas Board President

Dear Friend of Las Casas,

Greetings to you in this month of June ~ Ode'imini-giizis ~ the moon of the strawberry. On behalf of the Board, I am pleased to share the annual Las Casas newsletter with you.

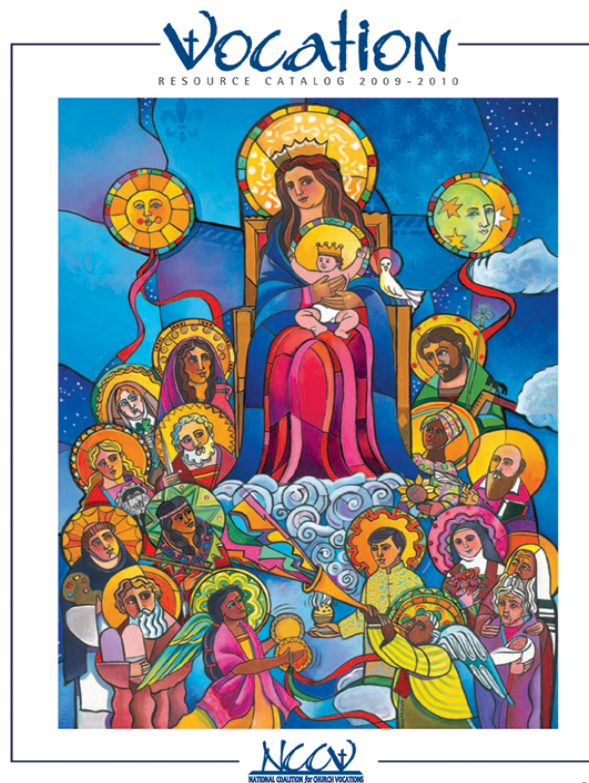
The Las Casas Board met in April and \$8,000 in grants was awarded. Storytelling has a long and rich tradition among Native Americans. Some of the stories of our Dominican sisters who were awarded grants in 2008 come alive for you in this newsletter. The newsletter is also full of helpful information. Enjoy reading it and pass it on! It is also posted on our website ([www.domlife.org/lascasas](http://www.domlife.org/lascasas))

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Tekakwitha Conference which is celebrating 70 years of faithful service to Catholic Native Americans. We are blessed to share in the leadership of Sister Kateri Mitchell, SSA, executive director of the Tekakwitha Conference, who serves on the Las Casas Board.

Thanks for your interest and support of the work of Las Casas. These are challenging economic times for so many people. In the Dominican tradition of justice, our sisters and brothers in Native American ministry face these challenges daily. Las Casas is able to assist them because of the generosity of those who respond to the annual appeal. Thanks for your generous response and prayers. Consider a gift in honor or memory of someone you know ~ it is a gift that keeps on giving!

Enjoy the beauty of springtime as it graces Mother Earth.

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



S2.00

### National Coalition for Church Vocations (NCCV)

#### Native American Outreach Project

Native Americans are often forgotten in Catholic Church vocation ministry efforts. The Las Casas grant allowed NCCV to contact all Dominicans who minister with Native Americans in the United States. A direct mailing included a copy of the 2009-2010 *Vocation Resource Catalog (VRC)* which contains 290+ vocation resource materials. A cover letter and free samples were also sent. Dominicans engaged in Native American ministry were invited to choose resources to help them in their ministry. The expenses

related to the resources were at no cost to them. The generous Las Casas grant covered all expenses related to the requests.

The cover image for the 2009-2010 VRC entitled “*Queen of the Saints*” by Brother Michael O’Neill McGrath is from the published book “*Blessed Art Thou.*” © 2004, World Library Publications, Franklin Park, Illinois. It was used with permission of World Library Publications. Note the image of *Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha* (row 2, image 2)!

NCCV ([www.nccv-vocations.org](http://www.nccv-vocations.org)) was pleased to be able to reach out to Dominicans engaged in Native American ministry throughout the United States due to the generous grant from Las Casas. *Thanks Las Casas!*

Diane Poplawski, OP (*Racine*)

## Project Learning Expansion

Montana has eleven Indian tribes living on seven reservations that are rich strongholds of Native American heritage. The Fort Belknap Indian Reservation is home to two tribes, the Assiniboine and Gros Ventre, and encompasses 650,000 acres of plains and grasslands in north-central Montana. Mission Grade School is located in the southern corner of Fort Belknap in the small town of Hays.

For too long, society has tried to convince many Native American students that they are not capable of succeeding. There is no doubt that we see numerous obstacles on our reservations but these negative cycles can be broken. With encouragement, motivation, and the proper “tools,” Native American students can excel and accomplish great things. The entire staff at Mission Grade School is deeply committed to these ideals and we strive each day to give our children the opportunities they deserve.

With the help of Las Casas, we were able to continue and expand Project Learning – a project that increased a sense of belonging and purpose for each of our students. We exposed our children to new experiences and it was a

joy to witness their enthusiasm. Part of our project included:

- A three day field trip to Bozeman, MT with our fifth and sixth grade students.
- Participation in the Blaine County Spelling Bee.
- A trip to the Fort Belknap College Demonstration Farm.

All of these experiences were extremely beneficial and “exciting” for our students.

Thank you, Las Casas, for the work you do in helping us to “seek justice” in the lives of our Native American children.

Christine Ferrar, OP (*Sparkill*)

## Rocky Boy’s Indian Reservation

The 69<sup>th</sup> Annual Tekakwitha Conference, July 2-6, 2008 was held in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. The theme of the Conference was *One Heart-All Nations* and over 700 Native Americans and friends from the United States and Canada attended the gathering.

The Chippewa-Cree of Rocky Boy’s Indian Reservation are closely related to the Canadian Cree, so this was a “once in a lifetime” opportunity to participate in a spiritual gathering with relatives and friends in Canada. With the help of a Las Casas Grant, some people from Rocky Boy’s Indian Reservation in North Central Montana were able to attend the Conference.



Two lay catechists from Rocky Boy's Reservation offered a workshop during the conference on the *Catechesis of the Good Shepherd* Montessori method of religious education. Margaret Jarvey and LaVerne Parker presented two sessions and both were well attended. The sessions generated enthusiastic interest among clergy and lay participants, who were encouraged to attend future CGS summer training sessions in Box Elder.

A small portion of the grant helped defray expenses for the CGS training sessions for catechists. The spiritual and educational enrichment provided for catechists has been a great blessing to all, especially to the children (ages 3-12) who are formed in this Montessori method.

We thank all members of the Las Casas Board and Dominicans who contribute to Las Casas for your generosity and support.

Kathleen Kane, OP (*Sparkill*)



## Fort Belnap Attends Tekakwitha Conference

When it was learned that the 69<sup>th</sup> Annual Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha Conference was to be held in Canada, a small group of Catholics from the Fort Belnap Indian Reservation in Montana felt a strong urge to attend.

The price of gasoline, the long distance, and the cost of housing and meals at first appeared to make this desire unrealistic and perhaps even selfish. Doubts raged on the part of those who wanted to go. How could any one of them even

consider spending money on a trip, even a religious trip, when their families were wanting in so many ways? And who would care for their families while they were gone?

Spiritual needs soon won out, for themselves, their families, and their reservation.



With the provision of funds from Las Casas, combined with other resources, Fort Belnap was well represented at the Tekakwitha Conference. "One Heart, All Nations", was a theme that also described our diverse group of Tribal members – Assiniboine, Gros Ventre, Cree ranging in ages from 11 to 87, included Philomene Hawley, Jessie James-Hawley, Roberta Werk, Nellie Main, Dawn Bishop-Moore, Cecelia Moore, Hunter Strait, Metis Hawley, Shelby Denny, Wanda Denny, Linda Azure and one Italian, Sister Laura Fucito.

Traveling in 3 vehicles, the group began their six-day journey from Montana on July 2, 2008, to Edmonton, Calgary, Canada, where the major conference activities were held.



Memories of the procession of Tribal banners dedicated to Tekakwitha, the Mass officiated by the Bishops of Canada, the outdoor Mass held at Lac Ste. Anne Shrine, the walking into the healing waters, the sharing of faith with so many and the joining of prayers for personal and universal intentions, all these will live forever in the hearts of the Fort Belknap pilgrimage.

Laura Fucito, OP (*Sparkill*)



## Ministry in Chinle

Thanks for the grant money which was applied toward a laptop, projector, and power-point to be used in my ministry at Chinle, AZ and with the workshops, prayer, retreats, seminars, deanery presentations, parish and young group instructions.

The equipment made available by the Las Casas grant has been a wonderful asset in my work. Thanks!

Margaret Rose Bohn, OP (*Racine*)



## 70TH ANNUAL TEKAKWITHA CONFERENCE



Raleigh, North Carolina  
July 1-5, 2009

The Annual Tekakwitha Conference will be held July 1-5, 2009 in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Other upcoming events sponsored by the Tekakwitha Conference National Center are:

**--Basic Directions in Native Ministry** held at the Sioux Spiritual Center in Plainview, South Dakota from June 15<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>.

**-2009 Mini-Tekakwitha Conference Retreat** held at New Melleray Abbey in Peosta, IA from September 29-October 2, 2009. Contact person: Fr. Kenneth Tietjen, OCSO, New Melleray Abbey, 6632 Melleray Circle, Peosta, IA 52068.

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## In Memorial

Former Board Members

*Mary Karen O'Kelly, OP (Springfield) - 2009*  
*Gerri O'Meara, OP (Sinsinawa)- 2006*

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

May 1, 2008 through April 31, 2009  
We regret any errors or omissions.  
Please report discrepancies to  
[lascasasop@gmail.com](mailto:lascasasop@gmail.com)

Adrian Dominican Sisters  
Dominicans of St. Catharine Kentucky  
Dominican Sisters Congregation of St. Mary  
Dominican Sisters of Amityville  
Dominican Sisters of Blauvelt New York  
Dominican Sisters of Great Bend  
Dominican Sisters of Houston  
Dominican Sisters of Springfield  
Dominican Sisters of Taos New Mexico  
Eucharistic Missionaries of St. Dominic  
Maryknoll Sisters  
Monastery of the Blessed Sacrament Cloistered  
Dominican Nuns  
Province of St. Joseph Dominicans  
Racine Dominicans  
Sinsinawa Dominicans  
Sisters of St. Dominic of Tacoma  
Vietnamese Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine

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Las Casas Board *In Memory of Ronald Rebbe*  
Marilyn Francoeur  
*In honor of Adrian Dominican Jubilarians 2008*  
Diane Poplawski, OP  
*In honor of Racine Dominican Jubilarians 2008 and 2009*  
Charlotte Rebbe, OP  
*In memory of M. Karen O'Kelly, OP, Springfield, LasCasas Board Member*  
Gail P.Himrod, OP  
*In Memory of Mimi Lynch, OP*  
Knights of Columbus of Okeene, Oklahoma  
Rev. John R. Morris, OP

In Kind Donations

Adrian Dominicans  
Akron Dominicans  
Tekakwitha Conference  
Hope Dominicans  
National Coalition for Church Vocations

Racine Dominicans  
Sinsinawa Dominicans  
Springfield Dominicans  
Sisters of St. Ann  
St. Albert the Great Province  
St. Joseph Province  
Rick Bozarth  
Frye-Williamson Press

**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)  
**NEW WEBSITE**

## Las Casas Board Members

Barbara Bogenschutz, OP (*Springfield*)

*Vice President*

Eugene Cahouet, OP (*St. Joseph*)

Mary Therese Johnson, OP (*Sinsinawa*)

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

Diane Poplawski, OP (*Racine*)

*President*

Charlotte Rebbe, OP (*Springfield*)

*Secretary*

Marilyn Winter, OP (*Adrian*)

*Treasurer*



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