



Dear Friend of Las Casas,

“LAUDATO SI’, mi’ Signore” – “Praise be to you, my Lord.”

In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. “Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with colored flowers and herbs. This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will.... We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters.” (Pope Francis, Laudato Si 1-2).

The Native/Indigenous People have not forgotten the sacredness of all creation and have preserved and celebrated this “beauty” in their culture and religious celebrations. This is also reflected in the tradition and beliefs of the Benedictines who lived among the Native American tribes since the late 19th century. “We share a spirit of reverence for all creation and a sense of the oneness with the land; the days and changing seasons...Our land is sacred to the Native Americans who walked these ancient trails long ago and to the people who continue to bless it with their presence today.” (Benedictines of Holy Wisdom Monastery web site).

A classic description of God and the nature which God created was “beautiful”. This was one of the highest cultural values of the Native/Indigenous People. They experienced the presence of God everywhere, especially in nature. As Pope Francis so clearly says, as Catholics we need an “ecological conversion” being called to continue the protection of God’s creations, to respect all that God created. We could do no better than to recognize and preserve the values of the Native/Indigenous Peoples’ culture and religious beliefs.

As members of the Las Casas Board, we take our inspiration from the courageous and passionate Fr. Bartolomé de Las Casas (1484-1566), a Spanish Dominican missionary who defended the rights of Native Peoples in the Americas. He wrote and preached on emancipation and the rights of Native Peoples for over 50 years. Even today, he stands among Dominicans as the defender of the victims of injustice and abuse and is considered one the influential preachers on human rights in the Americas.

Throughout the newsletter are examples of Dominicans working on reservations sharing the many ways contributions to Las Casas have supported their ministries. These men and women daily support the Native/Indigenous People in their struggle to live a life of dignity despite the treatment by our government and the racist culture which has plagued this country for years.

Our many thanks for the contributions we have received from you in the past and we ask for your continued prayers and support for this important ministry.

St. Kateri Tekakwitha, pray for us.

Nathalie Meyer, OP

Nathalie Meyer, OP

President for the Las Casas Board



The 2017 Tekakwitha Conference was a good experience for the five who attended from our local Kateri Circle. The Conference was held in Rapid City, South Dakota in July. The theme was: "Loving One Another through the Spirit of St. Kateri." This was particularly significant, since the Tekakwitha Conference is "under the protection and inspiration of St. Kateri Tekakwitha."



At the opening All Nations Grand Entry, one of our women commented that: "This celebration makes me so proud to be a Catholic Native American." Other women spoke about the presentations they heard and they felt affirmed and learned new insights. I gleaned many new insights for my ministry. One idea that will be very helpful to me is to establish a Youth Kateri Circle. I hope to be able to introduce this concept with some of our Native leaders as a way for us to invite more youth and their families into active participation in our parish.

A presentation that brought tears to my eyes was a little play called *Voices from the Past*. In this play three women represented tribal people, white settlers, and freed slaves. They spoke about their situation during different periods of history. The description of the human sufferings experienced by the Native Americans during certain periods was very moving. Another aspect of the story that impressed me was the change in attitude demonstrated by the white settler woman after she befriended a Native woman. The white settler changed from an attitude of challenging and blaming Natives to supporting them in their struggle for justice and fairness. This is also my experience with descendants of white settlers. There is a sense of harmony and mutuality among all the diverse cultures on the reservation where I minister. My assessment was confirmed later by one of our Native women.

Tekakwitha Annual Conference

July 17– 21, 2019

Sharonville, OHIO

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

JUNE 10-17, 2019

check website to confirm dates

Sioux Spiritual Center

20100 Center Road

Howes, South Dakota 57748-7703

605.985.5906

www.siouxspiritualcenter.org/retreats



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The Tekakwitha Conference was truly an inspiring and encouraging event. It was further enhanced by visiting with Nathalie Meyer, OP (Grand Rapids). I felt a sense of pride in our own Dominican Family. I am also grateful to the Las Casas Board for the grant that made it possible for members of our local Kateri Circle to attend the Tekakwitha Conference.



*We pray with faith and hope
for the continued intercession of
St. Kateri Tekakwitha in the lives of all people.*

Margaret Hillary, OP [Grand Rapids]

PHOTOS: top: Marcella and Margaret
bottom: Women from St. Ignatius Mission, Montana.
l-r: Ernestine, Marcella, Tammy, and Margaret



Nineteen members of Blessed Sacrament Parish in Lame Deer, Montana, attended the 2017 Tekakwitha Conference. "Loving One Another through the Spirit of St. Kateri" was the theme for the 78th Conference, held in Rapid City, South Dakota. People are drawn to the annual conference to celebrate their faith and culture. More than 750 attended. The conference is a time for members of numerous tribes throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico and beyond to gather. Participants are invited to share meals, hear presentations on various topics, attend prayer services and Mass. A special healing ceremony takes place and there was also a trip to visit the Crazy Horse monument located outside Rapid City.

Members of Blessed Sacrament Parish work hard throughout the year to raise the necessary funds to attend the conference. The children and youth who attended appreciated the youth program and are interested in attending another conference. Parish members most frequently mentioned the healing service as the highlight of the conference. The Las Casas grant was appreciated and helpful in allowing Blessed Sacrament parishioners to attend the conference.

LeAnn Probst, OP [Peace]

Welcoming Native Youth in Chicago

The St. Kateri Indian Center has been located within St. Benedict's Parish in Chicago for about five years. Previously, it was called The Anawim Center and was in Chicago from the 1990's until it was moved to St. Benedict Parish. As you may know, there are no reservations in Chicago, therefore, the Native People live "all over the place" and are from many different Nations. Every second and fourth Sunday of the month, we gather at the Center to celebrate Mass in the little chapel of the old convent and to share a wonderful potluck after liturgy.



The People of the community were very interested in attracting Native children to the new Center to help them learn about their culture, to have the opportunity to make some of their regalia, to be exposed to the teachings of the Elders and to form a Tekeri Youth Circle. Several folks got together and brainstormed about ways to accomplish this goal.

With the help of the Las Casas grant, we were able to allocate funding for marketing purposes to invite the Native American youth in Chicago to become more involved at the Center. At our St. Kateri Center Pow Wow in July, we were able to encourage the youth to attend

the event. We were able to reach out to Native American youth directly, as well as with adults who knew of youth that might participate in the St. Kateri Youth Circle and bi-weekly Masses. We set up a St. Kateri Center information booth at the Naperville Harvest Pow Wow in September and the American Indian Center Chicago Pow Wow in December. In addition, we stressed the importance of current community members inviting other family members or friends with youth to participate. We have been active with our Facebook page which is where we had the most response. We also sent out information in "Smoke Signals," the American Indian Center's email blast and the Chicago Public Schools' American Indian Education Program's weekly events blog. Other Native American community events allowed us the opportunity to personally hand out flyers and inform people about the St. Kateri Youth Circle to increase participation.

Our efforts were successful and helped spread the word and encourage youth to consider our invitation.



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The St. Kateri Indian Center has welcomed nineteen youth who are happily engaged in the numerous activities mentioned above. It is

our hope that more youth will find their way to join them. Thank you, Las Casas, for helping St. Kateri Indian Center to begin this youth program. It has been a real blessing to all involved.

*Jody Roy
and JoAnn Fleischaker, OP*
[Adrian]

Sympathy

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

Mary Jordan Langenhennig, OP
(Peace/St. Mary's New Orleans)
May 25, 2018

Mary Jordan

*ministered with Las Casas in
Thomas, Oklahoma from 1981 to 1987.
She was a highly skilled community organizer
and worked with local Native People
for justice and a better quality of life for the
Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribes.
She also served on the Las Casas Board.*

Nancy Amlung
Longtime Las Casas
Friend & Volunteer
October 24, 2017

Mary Ann Cirillo, OP (Hope)
Canton, Oklahoma
*at the death of her sister,
Catherine Mary Cirillo-Berdan*
April 8, 2018

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



Blessings to Kateri Mitchell, SSA

Kateri Mitchell, SSA (Sister of St. Anne) recently completed twenty years of service as the Executive Director of the Tekakwitha Conference. She has been the profound voice, the quiet and steady presence and the visionary leadership of the organization for twenty years!

The Tekakwitha Conference, a non-profit organization, advocates for evangelization among the Indigenous Catholics of North America and was founded in 1939 in Fargo, North Dakota. The Conference meets annually and is the largest gathering of Indigenous Catholics in the United States and beyond. The Conference is divided into six regions and encompasses people from the United States, Canada, Mexico as well as other countries. The mission of the organization is to share God's Word and to live the gospel message in the spirit



CNS/Paul Herring. Used with permission

of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha who is the patroness of the organization. The Conference is the Voice, Presence, and Identity of Indigenous Catholics of North America under the protection and inspiration of Saint Kateri.

Saint Kateri was the first Indigenous person of North America to be canonized a saint. Kateri Mitchell, SSA was an integral part of the final miracle that led

to the canonization of Saint Kateri. Kateri carried a first-class relic of St. Kateri Tekakwitha in the procession during the canonization in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican, October 21, 2012. Marilyn Winter, OP (Adrian), Las Casas Board member, also joined in the procession as a candle bearer.

Under the visionary leadership of Kateri Mitchell, the Tekakwitha Conference membership not only hosted the annual conference but expanded to a membership of approximately 1500 which encompasses all ages. She also encouraged the further development of Kateri Circles for adults and youth. Membership in the Conference is open to anyone who expresses an interest in Indigenous People and includes individuals, organizations and dioceses.



HONOR DANCE

[L-R] Margaret Troy, SSM, Bonnie Edwards, Michelle Boyd, Kateri Mitchell, SSA, Fr. Ed Cook, Pastor-Congregation of the Great Spirit



During her tenure as executive director Kateri traveled extensively joining Indigenous People throughout the country and beyond. She did presentations and served as consultant to numerous organizations, parishes and groups. She was also recognized as an significant faith leader by President Barack Obama and was invited by him to participate in one of the annual "Prayer Breakfast" held each year in Washington DC. Kateri was also appointed by Pope Benedict XVI as the first Native American consultant on the Pontifical Council of Interreligious Dialogue.

In March of 2018 while in Milwaukee working with the Congregation of the Great Spirit, she attended the Indian Summer Winter Pow Wow on March 11th. During that time an honor dance was held for her to thank her for her countless contributions to the Indigenous People. This gave the local Indigenous People an opportunity to thank her, in song, drum and dance, for her faithful presence and profound leadership. They also took the opportunity to present her with the gift of a bible with a hand beaded dove on the cover.

Kateri is a member of the Mohawk Nation of the Iroquois Confederacy (Haudenosaunee) and the Turtle Clan (matrilineal society). Kateri's exceptional leadership and remarkable wisdom touched the lives of countless people. When asked what the blessings of the ministry have been over these twenty years, Kateri reflected and commented on the numerous opportunities:

"To meet so many people representing a diversity of rich cultures from many countries and continents on Mother Earth;

To learn inter-tribal histories, traditions, customs, rituals, ceremonies and celebrations in the Americas;

To affirm and encourage the relationship and compatibility of Catholicism and Native Culture/Spirituality as gifts from a generous and loving Creator; and

To share the life of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha ~ God's special gift to the Universal Church."

Kateri shared twenty years of her life and spirit with the Tekakwitha Conference and helped it grow to be the successful conference it is today. Las Casas honors and congratulates Kateri on her twenty years of faithful service to the Conference and also acknowledges her generous service on the Las Casas Board.

Diane Poplawski, OP [Racine]

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



McGreal Center Celebrates 10 YEARS!

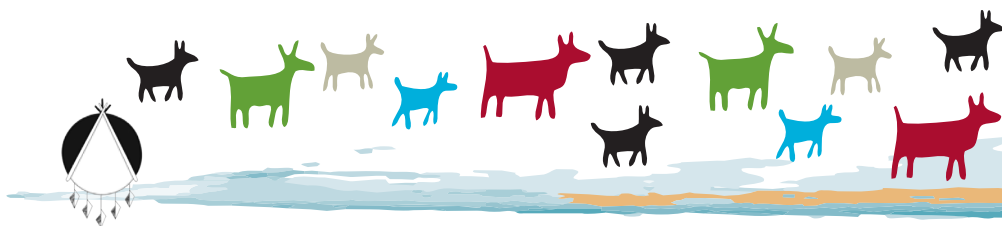
The Las Casas: Dominicans in Ministry with Native Americans, Inc. archives found a home at the Mary Nona McGreal, OP Center for Dominican Historical Studies in 2012. Prior to that, the archives traveled from New York to Oklahoma to Illinois to Wisconsin and finally, to the McGreal Center!

For more than forty years, Las Casas has played a significant role in the life of the Order of Preachers and strives to reflect collaboration among Dominicans and Native/Indigenous People. Over the years, numerous congregations of Dominican women as well as several provinces of Dominican men have ministered with or are currently ministering with Native/Indigenous People.



Las Casas congratulates the McGreal Center, Janet Welsh, OP (Sinsinawa) and the staff on their 10th anniversary. Las Casas is grateful for the professional expertise of the Center staff in helping to preserve the sacred story of Las Casas for the Dominican family and researchers for years to come.

PHOTO: Diane Poplawski, OP, on behalf of Las Casas, presents an anniversary gift to Janet Welsh, OP of the McGreal Center.



Hope for Healing

We hope for someday when our patients will no longer abandon hope for healing because medical professionals and medicines are not accessible. To make this 'someday' our reality, we have chosen empowerment of our health promoters through use of herbal medicines and alternative therapies as our way. Where pharmaceutical medications are prohibitive financially, medicinal plants are readily available in the mountains where the people live. Medications become accessible. Our health promoters beam with life when they are collecting plants, having asked for permission to cut them for healing purposes. When we see that the prevalent plants in a region have the medicinal properties most needed by the patients there, God's love becomes tangible. They become excited when the scientific pharmaceutical information on plants they hear in class confirms the traditional wisdom of their grandparents. As of last year, monthly, our promoters



attend to the patients with a local herbalist, an opportunity for them to sharpen their skills. They prescribe meds with a greater precision and confidence.

We are grateful that we can offer integral

therapy, complementing the limits of medications with psycho-physical therapies. We are seeing better results with our patients. For example, a boy has been unable to walk for several years. Carmen, our chief trainer, treated him in a visit to our health clinic. His parents began to hope again as their son gained some movements in his feet. Although continuing treatments with Carmen in the city was advised, his parents foreclosed the opportunity for financial reasons. Instead, his father asked a health promoter to continue with the massage locally. His trust in her means a lot to us. We are also proud for our young health promoter to have taken on a difficult case. Carmen, upon learning his situation, offered him a beautiful solution: to have the



boy receive free treatments at our training sessions under her supervision, enabling our health promoters in that village to offer the follow-up therapies.

Your support for these projects is a gift of solidarity in the empowerment of our Mayan sisters and brothers. Thank you, Las Casas, for walking with us!

Francisca Quintero Osorio, OP
[Mission San Jose]

A Reflection of My Experience

Our four days of living and learning at the 2018 Tekakwitha Conference in Tacoma, Washington were filled with prayer, music, dancing, and celebrating the heritage and customs of the Native Americans in the USA and Canada. For me, it was a new experience of life. In my fifty-six years of living community as a Springfield Dominican, I have crossed many borders and encountered the unknown worlds of so many different peoples and now I was able to wrap my arms around a new experience and learn first-hand what the Native Americans have to offer each of us. Their spirituality is entrenched in the earth and they have a love and respect for all of creation that is palpable. The highlight of the Conference was a trip to the Lummi Reservation. During our stay on the reservation, we went down to the beach to witness the arrival of the annual Tribal Canoe Journey as dozens of canoes carrying different tribes arrived on the beach. As part of our day, we had dinner and Mass celebrated by Archbishop J. Peter Sartain from Seattle. One of the servers was Jake Finkbonner, the boy who was cured of a flesh-eating disease through the intercession of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha. It was through this miracle that Pope Benedict XVI declared Kateri a saint. An added bonus was being able to celebrate the retirement of Kateri at the annual Pow-wow in Native American tradition. Thank you to Kateri and all of those who helped to make this Conference a memorable celebration.

As I have reflected on this experience, I have thanked God many times that I did not miss this opportunity in my lifetime. My eyes were opened to a new way of encountering the Holy. As the drums beat, my heart sang in unison with all of creation. What a beautiful place to flee in our troubled times.

Marie Michelle Hackett, OP [Springfield]

PHOTO: [l-r] Marilyn Winter, Kateri, Marie Michelle Hackett



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

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We regret any errors or omissions.
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In Honor of:

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visit us at: www.domlife.org/lascasas

