



Dear Friend of Las Casas:

Each day the news is filled with cultural tensions in the United States as well as in other countries. The current political tension is defining the national culture. At the core of this tension according to scholars is the threat to power and control. The majority groups in positions of power feel that the gains toward equality for a minority group are losses for the majority. As marginalized groups continue to progress away from marginalization, historians warn that the road toward equity will not be without political barriers. Differences cause tensions today as we have noted in our American history. The European settlers had great difficulty understanding and incorporating the culture of the Native/Indigenous People.

Our government is just getting around to acknowledging the injustices toward the Native/Indigenous People under the leadership of Interior Secretary Deb Haaland (Pueblo of Laguna). Over 600 geographic sites in the United States using the word “squaw”, a derogatory racial and sexist slur for Indigenous women, have been renamed within the last year. All of these are small steps in acknowledging the injustices to Native/Indigenous People for centuries. Despite the change in 2019 from “Columbus Day” to “Indigenous Peoples Day” the second Monday of October, some states still celebrate “Columbus Day”. In the news these last few years, we heard of the deaths in the 380 federally mandated Native American Boarding Schools started in 1819 in 37 states. They were modeled after the prison system by Captain Richard Henry Pratt who infamously said “that the school’s purpose was to kill the Indian, save the man”. Despite these atrocities over the years in our country, Dominican Sisters minister today with Native/Indigenous and the lives of both are enriched.

With your interest and support, these Dominican Sisters give witness each day to the resilience, strength, and perseverance of Native/Indigenous People. Tribal Nations continue to remember their heritage, and pass down their histories from generation to generation, as well as steward this country’s lands and waters and grow crops that feed all of us. We use their names for states, cities, streets, lakes, mountains and rivers. Native lore taught us how to fish, hunt and live off the land.

In this Newsletter stories of generous lives, give you a small glimpse of the ways in which your generosity helps those in great need. Your support helps those who have so little and live without many necessities. Our deepest thanks for your financial, prayerful, and moral support.

St. Kateri and Bartolomé de Las Casas, pray for us and Native/Indigenous People.

Nathalie Meyer, OP

Nathalie Meyer, OP
President for the Las Casas Board



Pine Ridge Reservation - Oglala, South Dakota

Living in Springfield, Illinois, the seat of the government, provides a busy life with people coming and going into the city. However, life isn't that way all over as two Springfield Dominicans found out in January of 2023. Rebecca Ann Gemma, OP, Prioress of the Springfield Dominicans, and Marie Michelle Hackett, OP, Leadership Team member, traveled to Oglala, South Dakota to the Pine Ridge Reservation for a visit with Barbara Ann Bogenschutz, OP, Pastoral Associate at Our Lady of the Sioux Parish.

Living on a reservation takes you into a totally different environment than city living or life in a rural community. Southwest South Dakota is known as the Badlands and there is very little land for harvesting and raising cattle. Most of the Natives live in trailers and there is much poverty.

Barbara Ann was on call each day to meet the needs of the Lakota Natives. Several nights when we were visiting, we took food to some of the families who had nothing to feed their children. We visited the sick and met with some of the elders. As part of our visit, we went to the home of George Looks Twice, the grandson of Nicholas Black Elk who is presently being considered for canonization. Barbara takes communion to George each week and we had the privilege of visiting with him and his family.



On the last evening, Rebecca Ann and I made dinner. It turned out to be a winner even though it was the first time we cooked with buffalo meat. We attended Sunday Mass in the Parish and participated in the Smudging ritual during liturgy. Some of the prayers were prayed in the Lakota language, which we found very prayerful and inspiring.

We drove back to Illinois after Mass grateful for the opportunity to be part of the Lakota Community for a few days. They have so much to teach us about creation and living the life of the Spirit.

*Wakan Takan kici un =
May the Creator/Grandfather/Great Spirit/God bless you.*

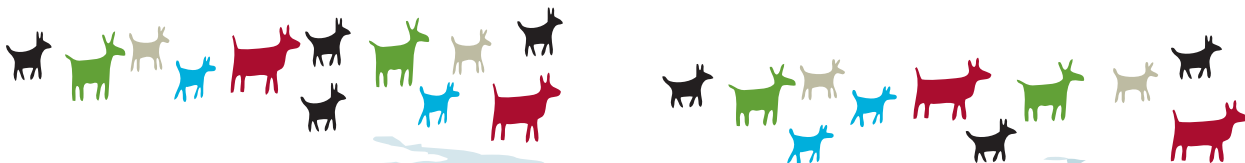


Marie Michelle Hackett, OP

Marie Michelle Hackett, OP [Springfield]

PHOTO: © Catholic Extension. Used with Permission.

SPECIAL THANKS to Barbara Bogenschutz, OP. Barb recently completed thirteen years of ministry on the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota among the Lakota people. In 2019-2020, Barb was a finalist for the "Catholic Extension's Lumen Christi Award." The annual award honors an individual or group working in an Extension Diocese who demonstrates how the power of faith can transform lives and communities. Barb's recognition for this award is a tribute to the ministry Barb has been involved in over the years on the Pine Ridge reservation. Barb also obtained several large grants during her time there. For thirteen years, Barb faithfully served and will be dearly missed by the Lakota people. Barb has been engaged in Native American ministry for over twenty-three years. Las Casas wishes Barb all the best as she takes some time for sabbatical.



I began ministry on the Flathead Indian Reservation in Montana in September 2009. I ministered as Director of Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry at Sacred Heart Mission in Arlee, St. Ignatius Mission Parish in St. Ignatius, and St. John Berchmans Mission in Jocko. These three communities are all one Parish in the Diocese of Helena, Montana.

The parish is served by Jesuits, who in the mid 1800's were invited by the Salish People to come to Montana. Shortly after the Jesuit Fathers arrived and began ministering with the people, the Sisters of Providence came. They established a school and medical clinic. When I learned about these early missionary sisters and all the good they did, I felt that I was following in the footsteps of very strong and good-hearted women of faith.



My ministry has been guided by a request that come from the first circle gathering of high school youth, who requested that their religious education be presented from a Native perspective. I contacted Kateri Mitchell, OSA, at the Tekakwitha Conference for advice. She recommended a beautiful series on the Sacraments adapted from the book "Finding a Way Home." One of the Salish elder advisors for that book is the grandfather of one of the families in our parish.

These resources present the teachings of the Catholic faith and affirmed our youth as they opened their hearts in discussions. The youth taught me how to cross a cultural boundary. Even though I had studied at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago and learned the theory about crossing a cultural boundary, I only held head knowledge. The youth taught me what it feels like to be a Native person in a white world. For their faith sharing with me, I am forever grateful. They shaped all my future ministries with the people of the reservation.

I have been richly blessed in this culturally diverse community. There is so much that I will miss ... I will miss all the people and their openness to me. I will miss our Kateri Circle, praying and singing in the Salish language, the cultural nuances of the

Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes that enhance our religious celebrations, Pow Wow celebrations and dancing. My heart is full as I carry many treasured memories with me into the next phase of life.

Margaret Hillary, OP

Margaret Hillary, OP [Grand Rapids]

SPECIAL THANKS to Margaret Hillary, OP. Margaret completed thirteen years of ministry on the Flathead Reservation in Montana among the Salish people in 2022. Margaret faithfully and generously served and will be profoundly missed by the people she served over the years. She was a frequent contributor to the Las Casas newsletter, sharing treasured stories and memories. Las Casas wishes Margaret blessings as she journeys into the next phase of her life and ministry.



Last October we left our Dominican Motherhouse at Sinsinawa, Wisconsin and moved to Milwaukee. We desired to find a parish in our neighborhood where we could worship with a diverse community and assist in their outreach ministry. We were blessed to join The Congregation of the Great Spirit, thanks to Diane Poplawski, OP (Racine) our Dominican Sister and friend.

On Sunday, we gather at Congregation of the Great Spirit (CGS) to celebrate Eucharist together as a Tribal Community. Native American spirituality and rich tribal traditions flow seamlessly into the liturgy. Father Ed Cook, our beloved Pastor, enlivens the heart and spirit of this community with his servant leadership, inviting Native American men and women to preside over their traditional rituals woven into our worship and prayer together.



Frequently after Eucharist, we gather to share a meal together. Favorite Native American foods grace our table of plenty and our lives are abundant with generosity, gratitude and sacred belonging. We leave CGS filled with renewed energy and vision to be gospel seekers and peacemakers. In December, the congregation celebrated their 33rd anniversary and all were invited to join in the celebration. The CGS is a unique parish that welcomes all and especially serves Native/Indigenous People from numerous tribes, some of which include the: Potawatomi, Menominee, Oneida, Ojibwe and Lakota.

There are numerous outreach opportunities to support the parish during the week. There is a vibrant outreach program administered by the Hunger Task Force, which provides food assistance to the numerous Native Americans living in the area as well as other people housed and unhoused. It is a joy to meet our faithful clients who come monthly for food assistance, as well as welcoming new clients and assisting them with registration. Patty comments that, "I treasure their life stories and the compassion and hospitality of the staff at CGS engendering trust and gratitude so evident among our amazing clients who enrich us."

Jo Anne was involved in ministry in Bolivia for years and shares this story about Juan: "Juan is welcomed by Dee, who shows him into the office and calls me to come and translate for him so Patty can begin the intake process, once he tells us this is his first visit to the food pantry. Juan is from Nicaragua." I ask him about the situation in his native country and he replies, "...there is a lot of repression and it is very hard to earn enough to make a living." Unfortunately, in the brief



Continued on page 5 ...



A Tribal Parish ... continued ...

conversations with other immigrants, the story is the same: poverty, violence, repression and political and religious persecution have become part of daily life.

In addition to the food pantry, there is a room designated for good used clothing. This is where Janet sorts, arranges and displays items in an attractive manner. As clients enter, Janet reflects that as “I welcome and invite them to browse and select any items they can use. It is during these moments that they share tidbits of their lives. Tears and sometimes prayers follow. As they leave, gratitude is expressed in a variety of ways. As I leave, I am a better person because they have touched my life.”

All of us at the Congregation of the Great Spirit are grateful to everyone who makes the grants from Las Casas possible and helps support the servant leadership of many and all who come to The Congregation of the Great Spirit.

Janet Delperdang, OP
Jo Anne Leo, OP
Patty Rinn, OP

Janet Delperdang, OP [Sinsinawa]
Jo Anne Leo, OP [Sinsinawa]
Patty Rinn, OP [Sinsinawa]

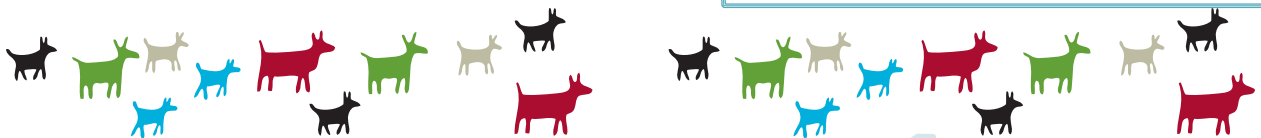


Annual Celebrations

Saint Kateri Tekawitha Feast Day · July 14
Indigenous Peoples' Day · 2nd Monday of October
Native American Heritage Month · November

HONOR NATIVE LANDS

- Do you know what Native/Indigenous People lived on the land you now occupy?
- Do you name and honor them when you gather together?
- Some resources for consideration:
<https://usdac.us/nativeland>
<https://native-land.ca>



Grief Support

As a bereavement minister with the Salish and Kootenai Native People on the Flathead Reservation in Montana, I initiate, organize and facilitate Grief Support Groups.

When one hears of the death of a loved one, he/she often becomes paralyzed and lives within a non-focused mode. After the funeral and some time has passed, the person may begin to share his/her feelings of grief with a friend, family member/s or may decide to attend a Grief Support Group. The length of time of grieving varies for each individual. Each person grieves in their own way and finds comfort in their own time.

When attending a grief support group session, those grieving talk about the death of their loved one and share the flood of feelings that can accompany grief. Other members listen, resonate with other's feelings, and may offer verbal and non-verbal support to a grieving member.

Some participants attending a Grief Support Group have shared...



"It's wonderful to come together with others who have been grieving. It helps to know I am not alone..."

"During a group session we are never alone. We appreciate the fact that others are there for us."

"Absolutely love this grief group. Everyone is so wonderful, and they are so helpful especially during this grieving process."

"This support group is so amazing, gives me an opportunity to talk about all that has happened."

Edith Schnell, OP
Edith Schnell OP [Grand Rapids]



Sympathy

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

Dan Johnson
January 2, 2023

Brother of
Mary Therese John, OP
Las Casas Board Member

May he rest in peace.



2023 Telakwitha Conference

This year's conference was held in Minneapolis, the city where the Board has decided to move the national office within the next year. The city has a vibrant Native American population and they have been officially welcomed by the diocese. The state, too, is very inclusive of many Native People and endeavors. The conference had several very fine sessions dealing with major concerns of the people today.

We heard about the Boarding School issues and received explanations about the method of researching and problems involved in going through the files to locate information (many different schools sent files to the diocese, different methods were used to report in former days, filing personnel were not always as exacting as needed, etc.). In addition, at times files are not found, perhaps were not sent or went to different congregations who operated the schools.

The many problems involved regarding the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Children surfaced in several sessions. People are concerned about the lack of legal response, at times apathy and/or no and/or slow response, the inability of many reservation legal entities to pursue the matter and the seeming disinterest and blindness to the fact itself on the part of the public.

Despite the sorrow and grief caused by the above situations the overall spirit of the conference was joyful and happy. People love to gather and reconnect each year and to share their life journeys' and family stories. The Grand Entrance is always important as we see many familiar faces and the mixing of people at tables for meals and sharing at liturgies is life-giving.

An added bonus for me was the presence of our Dominican brother, Jerry Stookey, OP. We were able to share our thoughts at the sessions we attended and enjoyed the entertainment that evening.

Thanks to Las Casas whose grant helped with expenses. It was wonderful.

Marilyn Winter, OP

Marilyn Winter, OP [Adrian]



Tekakwitha Annual Conference

July 3-7, 2024
Raleigh, North Carolina

email: tekconf@gmail.com
www.tekconf.org
1.844.483.3900



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Health Ministry:

It makes us happy to see our people openly demonstrate a growing trust in medications prepared with plants that their ancestors used. Having been part of a concerted movement for the recuperation of cultural wisdom for many years, we are grateful! Going further, our health promoters are learning to incorporate nutrition into their care of patients.

Going deeper, at the incrementing phenomenon of stress that sometimes results in suicides, we have initiated training in stress management. In a culture that is skeptical of psychological attention, our health promoters opted to learn it themselves in order to integrate the care of the heart in a manner that is culturally sensitive for patients. We held our annual retreat for the feast of our Brother Martin in order for our hearts to remember who we are and what we are about as health promoters. The retreat opportunity helped renew our energy and spirit for service. During retreat, we roasted marshmallows, a first experience for the majority, was a smash hit!!



As Sisters: Women and Earth

As we learned to do a double excavation of the soil, we ourselves felt free to expand and root more deeply. One daikon radish that we harvested months later was big enough for a meal for the entire family. We kept marveling how easy it was to make organic compost in our fields. It is not that hard to nourish our Mother Earth, yet how many of us neglect to do so. So now, we are doing it in different families, each initiated by women!!

Our friends from the Catholic Community at Stanford University, on their immersion experience last March, worked with a widow and her daughter to start a compost pile on her field. A beautiful gift of friendship!!!



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With increasing migration, more villages are left with women, elderly and children. To empower women in their capacity to bring nutritious food to the table while growing in caring friendship with the Sacred Earth is our response of resilient hope.

Thanks to Las Casas for your generous support and prayers. Your generosity helps us support those with greater economic vulnerability.

With love and gratitude from Chiapas.

Helena Im Jeong, OP
Francisca Quintero Osorio, OP

Helena Im Jeong, OP [Mission San Jose]
Francisca Quintero Osoria, OP [Mission San Jose]



Thank you!

Thanks to JoAnn Fleischaker, OP (Adrian) and Mary Therese Johnson, OP (Sinsinawa) who completed their service on the Las Casas Board. They were thanked during a prayer of thanksgiving at the Spring board meeting as they joined via zoom. While on the board, Mary Therese and JoAnn served on the grant committee. Mary Therese also served as vice-president and secretary of the board. JoAnn continues to serve on the Leadership Circle of the St. Kateri Center of Chicago.

Thanks JoAnn and Mary T!



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:

Annual Tekakwitha Conference

Completed applications are accepted annually and must be received by March 15th.

Applications are available at:
www.domlife.org/lascas



During the challenges of Covid, Nathalie Meyer, OP invited all Dominicans in ministry with Native/Indigenous People to gather quarterly via zoom and meet with the Las Casas Board. Those who could gather on a designated day came together when the pressing needs of ministry didn't require them to be elsewhere. The conversations shared were timely amidst the numerous challenges Native/Indigenous People faced during the pandemic. It helped the Board respond to urgent needs. The stories shared were inspirational and supportive for all. The gatherings have been so successful that they continue!



L-R top row: Edith Schnell, OP (Grand Rapids), Nathalie Meyer, OP (Grand Rapids), Helena Im Jeong, OP (Mission San Jose)
Diane Poplawski, OP (Racine), Jean Glach, OP (Peace), Rachel Sena, OP (Peace).

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 and ecology



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Tekakwitha Conference ~ www.tekconf.org

Saint Kateri Tekakwitha
Pray for us!

www.domlife.org/lascasas

Welcome
Kahleen Donnelly, OP
Sparkill
to service on the Las Casas Board!



Consider membership in the
National Native American
Boarding School Healing Coalition

www.boardingschoolhealing.org



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

July 1, 2022 through June 2023
We regret any errors or omissions.
Please report discrepancies to:
lascasasop@gmail.com

Dominican Sisters of Adrian
Dominican Sisters of Blauvelt
Dominican Sisters of Blauvelt Leadership Team
Dominican Sisters of Grand Rapids
Dominican Sisters of Hope
Dominican Sister of Mission San Jose
Dominican Sisters of Oakford
Dominican Sisters of Peace
Dominican Sisters of Racine
Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa
Dominican Sisters of Sparkill
Dominican Sisters of Springfield
Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena
 In Honor of the People of Ukraine
Dominican Sisters of Tacoma
Dominican Nuns of the Monastery of the
 Blessed Sacrament
Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic CLT
Dominican Friars, St. Albert the Great Province
 In Memory of Chuck Leute, OP
Anonymous
Grace Augustine, OP [Blauvelt]
Kyla Mrazek
Aneesah McNamee, OP [Adrian]
Joyce Roach, OP [Tacoma]
Sisters of St. Anne

In Honor of:

Adrian Dominican Jubilarians 2023
 Marilyn Winter, OP
 Marilyn Francoeur, OP
Mary Ann Cirillo, OP [Hope]
 Linda and Don Brusco
 Mr. and Mrs. William O'Donnell
Grand Rapids Dominican Jubilarians 2022
 Nathalie Meyer, OP
Racine Dominican Jubilarians 2022
 Diane Poplawski, OP
Barbara Bogenschutz, OP [Springfield]
JoAnne Fleischaker, OP [Adrian]
Margaret Hillary, OP [Grand Rapids]
Mary Therese Johnson, OP [Sinsinawa]

In Memory of:

Dan Johnson
 Las Casas Board
Chuck Leute, OP [St. Albert the Great Province]
 St. Albert the Great Priory, Minneapolis, MN
Ada and Earl Littleman
 JoAnn Fleischaker, OP [Adrian]



Contributions to support Las Casas and Dominicans in ministry with Native/Indigenous People

\$100 \$200 \$300 \$500
 Other \$ _____ Anonymus

My contribution is made [please print]

In Honor of _____

In Memory of _____

Name _____

Address _____

City State, Zip _____

E-mail _____

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

c/o Diane Poplawski, OP
5635 Erie Street
Racine, WI 53402-1900

Las Casas Board

L-R: Diane Poplawski, OP (Racine)
Kateri Mitchell, SSA (Sister of St. Anne)
Marie Michelle Hackett, OP (Springfield)
Nathalie Meyer, OP (Grand Rapids]
Marilyn Winter (Adrian)
Kathleen Donnelly, OP (Sparkill)



visit us at: www.domlife.org/lascasas