



Dear Friend of Las Casas:

Columbus' "discovery" of America continues to be a source of amusement to most Indigenous People, who wonder how someone can discover a place already occupied by millions of people for thousands of years. If Native Americans are mentioned at all in social studies texts today, the Indigenous People are characterized as particularly warlike.

In 2000, the Energy Information Administration estimated that 14 percent of households on Native American reservations had no access to electricity in the US. In the September 30th, 2024 issue of TIME magazine in the article entitled "A Question of Balance" notes that the Navajo Nation has first rights to the water around it, yet "pays the most and gets the least". Off the reservation in the desert area, there are shady trees, ornamental fountains, and manicured landscapes with golf courses and swimming pools and individuals consume 300 gallons per person daily. In contrast, the Native Navajo People use 5 gallons per person daily and either walk miles or drive miles over rough roads to collect it.

Most Indigenous religious/spiritual beliefs view the earth as the mother to all things. Since all creatures and plants depend on the earth for food, clothing, shelter and water, we are bound together as kin. If the earth is our mother, then all things upon her are our brothers and sisters. This relationship of respect for the environment and living in harmony with it instead of trying to dominate it is a widespread and fundamental belief among Indigenous People. The protection of land and water rights, including access to clean water for Native Americans across the country, are top priorities for Tribal communities.

As you read the stories from the Dominican Sisters on reservations and in urban areas in this issue, you will note the challenges and the joys of journeying with people who have been treated poorly by our government. Oftentimes the words to describe Native Americans today are derogatory but as a nation, we are responsible for putting them on reservations without adequate land to cultivate, away from opportunities for employment or education, and introduced them to "fire water".

This Newsletter gives you glimpses of how Dominicans are making a difference and the ways in which your generosity helps those in need. Our deepest thanks for your financial, prayerful, and moral support.

St. Kateri and Bartolomé de Las Casas, pray for us as we continue to be there for those who suffer because of prejudices.

Nathalie Meyer, OP

Nathalie Meyer, OP
President for the Las Casas Board



Hanna's Story · Not to be Forgotten ...

In 2013, when Hanna did not return home from the July 4th Northern Cheyenne pow-wow in Lame Deer Montana, her family notified the police. They were told that she was probably out “partying” and would eventually come home and, since she was an adult, no action was needed. Without the help of law enforcement, the family organized their own search party to find Hanna. Four days later, they found her badly decomposed remains at the bottom of a small hill near the rodeo grounds, “discarded like a piece of trash.” Dead at the age 21, she left behind a 10-month old son and a devastated family. It was impossible to determine a cause of death, though later testimony confirmed that she had been raped and beaten to death. Suspects were eventually found (they had even joined in the search for her!), convicted and sentenced, but that was not enough for her family. Her death raised awareness of the large number of Native women that go missing or are murdered.



Hanna's now 11 year old son helps place the crown on the head of the Blessed Mother. The quilt features the red handprint, the symbol of the MMIW movement.

An overlooked crisis, each year in Montana Indigenous people go missing, often never found. Although the Native population comprises only 7% of the state population, they account for 26% of missing person's cases. Nationally, Native American women are up to 10 times more likely to be sexually assaulted, missing and murdered (the third leading cause of their deaths). Indigenous families seeking justice are often disregarded and ignored. Inadequate police forces responsible for vast areas, as well as the mixed jurisdictions of federal and local law enforcement make it more difficult to respond to such cases in a timely manner. Consequently, perpetrators often go unfound and unpunished.

As a result of her own experience and increased awareness of this crisis among Native people, Hanna's mother, Melinda, became a relentless leader in the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's (MMIW) movement. Her efforts, along with others, resulted in the passing of “Hanna's Law” authorizing the Montana Department of Justice to assist local law enforcement with the investigation of all missing person's cases as well as requiring the hiring of a missing person's specialist. May 5th, Hanna's birthday, has also been designated as the National Day of Awareness for the MMIW movement. Each year on this date, various organized community actions are now taking place across tribal lands as Native women are rising up to say “No More Stolen Sisters”. They wear red, a color that represents “the lifeblood and connection between all people”. It is especially significant for many Indigenous people who believe red is the only color seen by spirits and so is worn to call the spirits of the missing and murdered back to their loved ones. Their symbol, a red handprint across the mouth, stands for all the missing ones whose voices are not heard, for the oppression and subjugation of Native women and the silence of the media and law enforcement in the midst of this crisis. In 2022, President Biden issued a proclamation that extended the day to cover all genders, changing MMIW to MMIP (Missing and Murdered Indigenous People) taking into account the number of Native men who are also among the missing and murdered.

continued on next page ...



Melinda and her family are members of our Blessed Sacrament parish in Lame Deer, Montana on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation and have been instrumental in keeping this important issue before us. This year May 5th fell on a Sunday. Together with Hanna's family, the parish community gathered for Mass and a May crowning devotion followed by a "birthday" celebration/luncheon with others involved in the movement, complete with a drum group! We then joined the march down the main street and participated in the activities at the Tribal Council building.

As a parish, the generosity of donors enables us to continue to encourage and help families on this reservation who have and are suffering in this way and to support the ongoing efforts of this movement as they seek to raise awareness of this crisis and pursue justice for the victims of murder. Much work still needs to be done, but as Melinda has observed: *"As a mother, nothing will replace the loss of my daughter, but by organizing to support the National Day of Awareness and creating the changes needed, I know it will help others. And Hanna and so many others will not be forgotten."*

May it be so.

Jean Glach, OP

Jean Glach, OP (Peace)

NOTE: Consider wearing **RED** on May 5 each year in support of the MMIP movement.

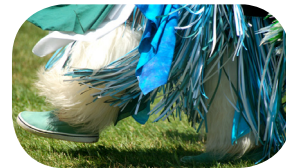
For further reading and resources:

<https://www.bia.gov/service/mmu/missing-and-murdered-indigenous-people-crisis>

<https://www.justice.gov/tribal/mmip>

<https://www.nativehope.org/missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-mmipw>

SEARCH: *No More Stolen Sisters*



Annual Celebrations/Remembrances

Wear Red Day - May 5

recognized across the United States and Canada as the National Awareness Day for Missing or Murdered Indigenous People.

Saint Kateri Tekawitha Feast Day · July 14

Indigenous Peoples' Day · 2nd Monday of October

Orange Shirt Day - September 30

also known as the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, which honors and remembers the children who attended residential schools in the United States and Canada.

Native American Heritage Month · November



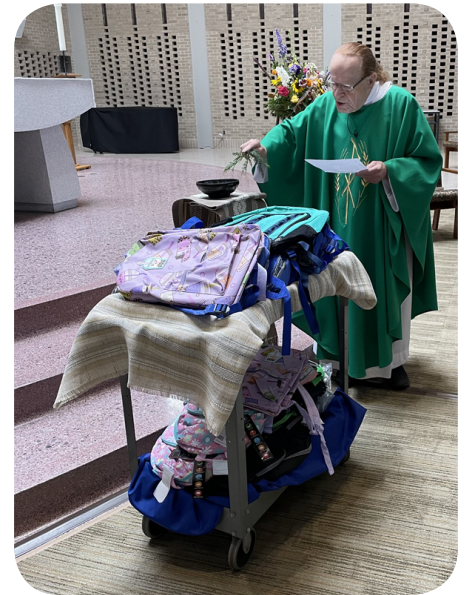
Everyone Has a Story

The Congregation of the Great Spirit (CGS) is a sacramental community that not only gathers on Sunday to worship and pray together but also lives out the gospel throughout the week. During the week, they reach out to provide the hungry with food and those in need of clothing. CGS houses a storehouse of stories that enrich the lives of staff and volunteers who encounter our brothers and sisters who come seeking assistance, understanding and support. Here are some of their stories...

An “unsheltered” man came who needed food and clothing for himself and his son and daughter. They were living in someone’s backyard, which provided some measure of protection against violence on the street. His story of the pain of his inability to provide food and shelter for his children echoed “the cries of the poor” so evident yet so overlooked and unrecognized in our country’s systemic culture which rewards the rich and oppresses the poor.

While sleeping on the ground, he developed a burning rash on his face and arms. Tears of relief and gratitude streamed down his face and into our hearts as he left with food for his family, some new socks and clothing for him and his children, and the assurance of medical care at a near-by clinic. Leaving, he smiled and said, “I just knew you would help me through this difficult time. Thank you!”

It was closing time when a middle-aged woman entered the clothing area adjoining the food pantry. She was quiet and appeared sad. The woman was welcomed, given a large bag and invited to take any clothing she needed. She looked around, carefully placing items in her bag. After a brief time, she quietly expressed her thanks and left.

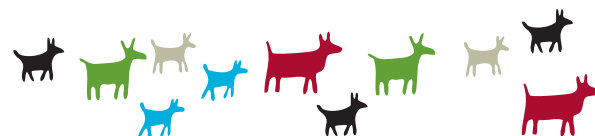


Father Ed Cook, pastor of CGS blesses backpacks.



One of the volunteers met her and noticed she was crying. Being very concerned, she asked the woman what was wrong and if she could be helpful. The woman in her same quiet manner stated that when she came to the pantry, she only had the clothes on her back and she now had a bag full of beautiful, clean clothes. Tears of gratitude dampened the woman’s face and as the story was retold, touched the hearts of the volunteers. So many people are given a new lease on life through the goodness of others. We are grateful for the support from Las Casas.

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The people coming through our doors each week, gift us with stories that continue to deepen our awareness of the suffering and pain so many carry daily. Their voices challenge and invite us to listen carefully and compassionately to the cries of the poor in our midst. Their presence challenges us to reexamine our comfortable and privileged lifestyles.

*Janet Delperdang, OP
Jo Anne Leo, OP
Mary McNulty, OP
Diane Poplawski, OP
Patty Rinn, OP*

Janet Delperdang, OP (Sinsinawa)
Jo Anne Leo, OP (Sinsinawa)
Mary McNulty, OP (Sinsinawa)
Diane Poplawski, OP (Racine)
Patty Rinn, OP (Sinsinawa)

NOTE: During Lent and in the Fall, Racine and Sinsinawa sisters, associates, friends and staff did food, clothing and school supply drives that helped supply the food pantry, clothes closet and students at CGS.



Scholarship Program

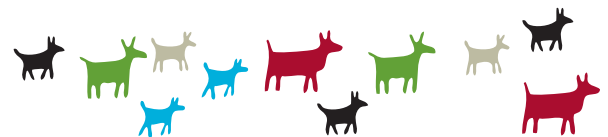


Dominicans in ministry with Native/Indigenous People, or preparing for this ministry, may apply for a scholarship (up to \$500) to be used for:

Annual Tekakwitha Conference

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

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



86th Tekakwitha Annual Conference

2025 Las Cruces, New Mexico
check website for more details

email: tekconf@gmail.com

www.tekconf.org

1.844.483.3900



Artist@Tisket. Used with permission.



In early July, I returned to Lodge Pole, an Assiniboine community on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation in North Central Montana, to pray with those participating in the annual Sun Dance. Years ago, I was a Sun Dancer in Lodge Pole, and return every year to support those who decide to fast from food and water for three days while they dance in place, sacrificing and praying for their families and all who need or ask for prayers. The weather, mostly in the 70's in Lodge Pole was ideal for a Sun Dance. The deep blue sky, fluffy clouds, beautiful sunrises and sunsets, surrounded by the Little Rocky Mountains, provided the perfect atmosphere for prayer and meditation.

The previous week, the Chippewa-Cree on the Rocky Boy Reservation, my current place of ministry, gathered for their annual Sun Dance. However, theirs was accompanied by three days of heavy rain, thunder, and lightning. The dancers were hoping for sun, but danced in the cold, wearing blankets during the day to ward off the chills, and slept on the wet ground during the night. Someone remarked that the Sun Dance is an 'all weather' ceremony.

A day before the Sun Dance begins an enclosure is constructed. It's an arbor, open to the sky, made of tree branches placed in a circle to accommodate the dancers. In the center drummers, singers and supporters sit on the ground or on a blanket. The dancers are called in by the camp crier and enter together. They begin dancing as soon as they hear the first drumbeats. Friends and family members come to support them, singing and praying in the center from sunrise till late at night. At sunrise, the Sun Dancers, awakened by the drums, rise up and continue dancing in place.

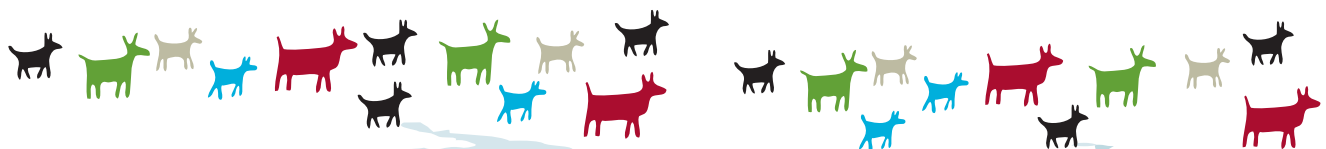
Each Sun Dancer makes a commitment to participate for four consecutive years. The Sun Dance could be compared to 'Holy Week'. This ritual combines three days of fasting and prayer with a wonderful celebration late on the third day, when the participants 'come out' tired, thirsty, weak, yet joyful. Each is offered a cup of blessed water, and greeted by friends and family. The enclosure is then taken down. Later, all are seated in a large circle on the ground, and food is blessed and served to everyone by men appointed for this task.

The kindness and welcoming spirit of those camping on the Sun Dance grounds in Lodge Pole was evident, as people assisted the elderly, raised tents, welcomed visitors, and prayed together. During the day, children accompanied parents into the lodge, learning to quietly watch the singers, dancers and drummers. Some would be invited to sit with the drummers. At other times, they explored the beautiful Little Rocky Mountains that surround the Sun Dance grounds. In a world of tension and conflict, this peaceful gathering lifted my spirit.

Kathleen Kane, OP

Kathleen Kane, OP (Sparkill)

NOTE: No photos accompany this article to honor the tradition that no photos or filming are allowed at the Sacred Sun Dance grounds as they gather for their sacred rituals and practices.



Saint Kateri Center Family Retreat

“**T**

he Saint Kateri Center is the voice, presence, and identity for spirituality and prayer of the American Indian community within the Archdiocese of Chicago. In the spirit of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, the Saint Kateri Center embodies and preserves the spiritual practices and traditional cultures of the Native people within the Catholic Church.” (www.stkatericenterchicago.org).

The 2010 census indicated that 78% of Native Americans live off tribal lands and 70% of this population live in urban settings. The city of Chicago has the eighth largest urban Native American population in the country. Within Cook County, there are approximately 39,000 Native Americans. Young people 24 and younger make up 42 percent of that total population. The Saint Kateri Center reaches out to this population throughout the year with numerous activities. In 2022, we offered the first Family retreat and due to the success of the program, we have been able to offer it every year.



The Family retreat takes place each spring at Eagle Ridge Resort in Galena, Illinois. The retreat offers our urban Native American families leadership training and team building skills. We strive to provide an atmosphere for intergenerational family bonding. Studies have shown that intergenerational experiences can help build needed social skills and reinforce norms, beliefs, and values, especially in younger people. Not only does it foster a greater sense of community and support, but it also helps younger generations create a stronger sense of self-identity. Members from the community proficient in these areas help with the program.



Part of the retreat also includes the story about the life of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha and her place as a Native American saint in the Catholic Church. The retreat provides time for prayer, cultural activities and teachings, storytelling and family fun. As you can imagine, the urban setting presents unique challenges for Native Americans. Due to generational trauma, language, and cultural teachings have not been passed down from generation to generation. There is a need nationwide for activities that focus on improving the lives of Native youth and developing the next generation of leaders.

The annual retreat invites families to gather together, take time away from their busy city life, and be enriched by their cultural traditions and faith. In 2024, sixteen families participated. We are grateful to Las Casas and other generous donors for the opportunity to lend financial support to families for this unique gathering and for being a part of developing future leaders in our urban Native American community for generations to come.

JoAnn Fleischaker, OP
Jody Roy

JoAnn Fleischaker, OP (Adrian)

Jody Roy (Ojibwe)



Fostering Pockets of Peace in Chiapas

“Bendito sea el Señor! Blessed be the Lord!” This praise is constantly on the lips of a 95-year-old woman whose life has not been easy. The same kind of hopefulness, faith capable of acting with the Resurrected One, is asked of us now. As communities become terrorized by criminal organizations in armed territorial conflicts, our resilience to encroaching violence is to foster pockets of peace where we are.

We chose to focus on developing consciousness and habits for nonviolent living and restorative practices for conflict resolution within and among us. With this in mind, last spring we implemented a pilot program that embodied the nonviolent leadership of Jesus for and with young Mayan women. The goal is to develop skills that will be leaven for building peace in families and communities. The courses included Nonviolent Communication, Rights of Women and People, Emotional Resilience and a weeklong



workshop on Self-knowledge. Additionally, students and teachers enjoyed a course on Beekeeping that was integrated with literature, parts of Mexican history, science and health care. We also had an opportunity to participate in a local medical mission. When looking for some Mexican literature, we recommend *El Murmullo de las Abejas* (The Murmur of Bees) by Sofía Segovia.

Here are some reflections by our students:



Martha listening to girls, Feast of Santa Cruz.

“I experienced a great change. Through the classes, I got to know myself, value my inner self, manage my feelings and manifest my truth in my actions and words. I feel freer and happier to express myself. It gives me more confidence to be me.”

“Like the corn growing in the field, my thoughts and dreams have opened up; I am encouraged to fulfill my dreams, which I had almost abandoned.”

“It is important to pause, analyze and reflect on what is happening and to have sensitivity and awareness of narratives, especially to be aware of disguised and unconscious violence.”

“Nonviolent communication can help me in my dealings with patients so that my words do not hurt people.”

*Helena Em Jeong OP
Francisca Quintero Osorio, OP*

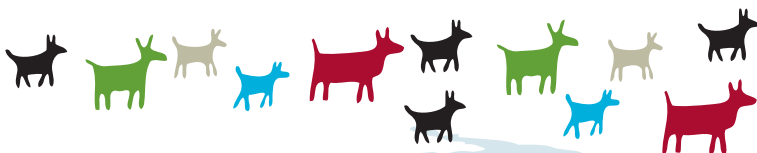
Helena Em Jeong OP
(Mission San Jose)
Francisca Quintero Osorio, OP
(Mission San Jose)



Student becomes teacher: Mari shows Lucy what she has learned of reflexology.



Some of our students with volunteer doctors at a mini medical mission.



Father Marcelo Pérez, 51, a priest of the Diocese of San Cristóbal de las Casas in the Mexican state of Chiapas, was assassinated on Sunday, October 20. He had just finished Mass when he was tragically killed. Father Pérez, a member of the Tzotzil Indigenous people, was an activist for Indigenous People and a prophetic presence and voice for the People.

Sister Helena shared that “He has fought for justice and peace for years, especially against the aggressions of narcos and colluded corrupt politicians. Sister Helena went on to ask that we “... hold the violence in Chiapas, a window to the global reality of violence, in your prayers. When we find ourselves in dire circumstances that are beyond our control, knowing that someone out there knows about us and prays with us is a great source of encouragement.”

Please join Las Casas in prayer for the people who knew and loved Father Pérez and Dominican Sisters Helena and Francisca (Mission San Jose) as they continue to minister and walk with the people amidst this tragedy and the challenges they face each day. Daily they strive to foster pockets of peace. (see article on page 8).

“Let us not become weary of doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” ~ Galatians 6:9



Photo: Diocese of San Cristóbal de Las Casas



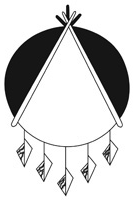
Consider membership in the
National Native American
Boarding School Healing Coalition

www.boardingschoolhealing.org

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>





LAS CASAS honors ... and is aware of the following Dominicans currently serving among Native/Indigenous People. They represent approximately 270+ years of service! Please keep them and the people they walk with in your prayers during these ongoing challenging times.

Barbara Bogenschutz, OP
Diane Poplawski, OP

Springfield
Racine

Gros Ventre, Assiniboine
Urban-Potawatomi, Menominee, Oneida, Ojibwe,
Lakota

Edith Marie Schnell, OP
Francisca Quintero Osorio, OP
Helena Im Jeong, OP
Jean Glach, OP
JoAnn Fleischaker, OP

Grand Rapids
Mission San Jose
Mission San Jose
Peace
Adrian

Confederated Salish, Kootenai
Tzotzil Speaking Mayas
Tzotzil Speaking Mayas
Northern Cheyenne
Urban-Ojibwe, Lakota, Dakota, Menominee,
Choctaw

Jo Anne Leo, OP

Sinsinawa

Urban-Potawatomi, Menominee, Oneida, Ojibwe,
Lakota

Kathleen Kane, OP
Mary McNulty, OP

Sparkill
Sinsinawa

Chippewa-Cree, Metis
Urban-Potawatomi, Menominee, Oneida, Ojibwe,
Lakota

Monica Dubois, OP
Patty Rinn, OP

Roman Congregation
Sinsinawa

Navajo
Urban-Potawatomi, Menominee, Oneida, Ojibwe,
Lakota

Rachel Sena, OP
Susan Gardner, OP

Peace
Adrian

Tohono O'odham
Chippewa, Odawa

If you are aware of other Dominicans serving among Native/Indigenous People
please contact: Nathalie Meyer, OP [Grand Rapids] at: nmeyer@grdominicans.org
YOUR generous donations directly support Dominicans in ministry with Native/Indigenous People.

Sympathy

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

La Verne Poplawski
August 8, 2024

Mother of
Diane Poplawski, OP
Las Casas Board Member

May she rest in 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



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

Saint Kateri Tekakwitha
Pray for us!

www.domlife.org/lascasas



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

July 1, 2023 through June 2024
We regret any errors or omissions.
Please report discrepancies to:
lascasasop@gmail.com

- Dominican Sisters of Adrian
- Dominican Sisters of Amityville
- 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 Sparkill
- Dominican Sisters of Springfield
- Dominican Sisters of Tacoma
- Dominican Friars, St. Albert the Great Province
- Grace Augustine, OP [Blauvelt]
- Bernadette and Vincent Frost
- Aneesah McNamee, OP [Adrian]
- Evelyn and William O'Donnell
- Joyce Roach, OP [Tacoma]
- Sisters of St. Anne

**In Honor of:
Jubilarians 2024**

- Adrian Dominicans
 - Marilyn Francoeur, OP
 - Marilyn Winter, OP
- Grand Rapids Dominicans
 - Nathalie Meyer, OP
- Racine Dominicans
 - Diane Poplawski, OP
- Sinsinawa Dominicans
 - Mary Therese Johnson, OP
 - Mary Ellen Winston, OP
- Mary Ann Cirillo, OP [Hope]
- Linda and Donn Brusco
- Diane Poplawski, OP [Racine]
- Mary Therese Johnson, OP
- April MacDowell

In Memory of:

- Patricia St. Jules
- Estate of Patricia St. Jules
- LaVerne Poplawski
- Las Casas Board



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

\$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 _____

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: Kathleen Donnelly, OP (Sparkill)
Nathalie Meyer, OP (Grand Rapids)
Marilyn Winter, OP (Adrian)
Diane Poplawski, OP (Racine)
Marie Michelle Hackett, OP (Springfield)



visit us at: www.domlife.org/lascasas