

Signpost

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July Signpost



St. Tekakwitha Opening prayer:

God of all nations and peoples. You have filled Your Creation with

Your mighty presence. Through Your handiwork You speak to our heart words that satisfy our every desire.

You called Your servant the Mohawk maiden Saint Kateri Tekakwitha to embrace the Gospel of your Son Jesus Christ to do Your will and to serve

others with the gifts You gave her.

May she who held tight to the cross of Your Son through her short life marred by sickness, suffering and persecution, be our intercessor during our own trials. May her embrace of the Catholic faith and her openness to sharing Jesus with others inspire us

to be new evangelizers to all cultures and peoples.

Amen

Who do we need to bring in the circle?

Who do we need to pray for:

Family members who are sick. Family members who have died. Struggles that we are facing.

Let us bring our joys and sufferings into this circle.

Direction:

Summer

South

White

Sin/ rage/ anger/ lust

Fruits of the Holy Spirit/ Patience/ Peace/self-control/

Gifts of the Holy Spirit/ Wisdom /Knowledge

Topic:

Pastoral Framework

Introduction

For the promise is made to you and to your children and to all those far off, whomever the Lord our God will call. — Acts: 2:39

As Catholic bishops, it is our sacred duty to make sure that Christ's sacred promise is kept to all his children. Despite a history of broken promises and failures to Indigenous populations¹ in the United States our God remains ever faithful. Encouraged by the promise of his Holy Spirit, which enlivens his Church, we labor to bring the Good News of salvation to all peoples. It is our duty as shepherds to promote and defend the dignity of human life, to strengthen families and communities in their faith, and to insure they develop a strong relationship with the Lord Jesus. This Pastoral Framework is intended to help the Church in the United States keep Christ's sacred promise to his Indigenous brothers and sisters, to remind them and ourselves of God's unending love for all his children, and to enliven hope for future generations.

¹ As of the 2020 Census, the U.S. federal government uses the following official terms to identify different Indigenous groups: American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander. For consistency, this document prefers to apply the term “Indigenous” to Native or aboriginal peoples in general, not to particular groups. U.S. Indigenous Catholic leaders also expressed a preference for the term “Indigenous” during a listening session with Catholic bishops in 2019. This usage is also consistent with Vatican terminology. The term “Native” (e.g., “Native American,” “Native Peoples,” “Native youth,” “Native Catholics”) is also acceptable and is commonly used to refer to these populations. For the purposes of this document, the terms “Indigenous” and “Native” are interchangeable, reflecting that people might prefer one or the other. See Black and Indian Mission Office and the USCCB Subcommittee on Native American Affairs, *Listening Session: March 26-27, 2019, Phoenix, AZ* (accessed April 17, 2023), blackandindianmission.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/2019-LISTENING-SESSION.pdf. Other Native governance resources consulted also indicate the capitalization of terms such as Native, Indigenous Peoples, Indian, and Tribe, when used both as nouns and adjectives or qualifiers.

The journey of Indigenous Catholics in the United States of America has been marked by moments of great joy but also of profound sorrow. Through this Pastoral Framework, we, the Catholic bishops of the United States, hope to begin anew a journey of mutual accompaniment with the Catholic Indigenous Peoples of these lands. We recognize that the Indigenous Peoples were the first to embrace the Catholic faith in this continent. Dedicated missionaries like St. John de Brébeuf, S.J. and St. Isaac Jogues, S.J., St. Junípero Serra, O.F.M, Venerable Frederic Baraga, Bishop of Marquette,² and Venerable Eusebio Francesco Chini (called 'Padre Kino'). S.J., gave up their homeland, family, and everything they knew in order to spread faith in Jesus Christ to Indigenous Peoples. Through the grace of the Holy Spirit, these initial missionary efforts took root, and many embraced the Christian faith. St. Kateri Tekakwitha, the Servants of God Antonio Inija and Companions (known as the Martyrs of La Florida Missions), the Servant of God Nicholas Black Elk, and countless other Indigenous Catholics are the fruit of their ministry. These holy Indigenous men and women became witnesses to their peoples, as well as models of faith.

Today, many North American Indigenous Catholics trace their faith to the decision of their ancestors to embrace Catholicism hundreds of years ago. Sadly, many Indigenous Catholics have felt a sense of abandonment in their relationship with Church leaders due to a lack of understanding of their unique cultural needs. We apologize for the failure to nurture, strengthen, honor, recognize and appreciate those entrusted to our pastoral care.

² Venerable Frederic Baraga, Bishop of Marquette, was a missionary to the Indigenous Peoples, traveling for miles on snowshoes and in harsh conditions for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the people. He authored 20 books in the Ojibwe language, including catechisms, prayer books and the dictionary and grammar of the language that is still being used today. As the founding bishop of the Diocese of Marquette, he issued his first pastoral letter in both English and Ojibwe. He also successfully fought against the relocation of the Indigenous Peoples.
<https://www.fatherbaraga.org/>

In July 2022, Pope Francis greeted the Inuit People in Iqaluit, the capital city of Nunavut during his pastoral visit to Canada. In what he called a “penitential pilgrimage,” he said, “We are here with the desire to pursue together a journey of healing and reconciliation that, with the help of the Creator, can help us shed light on what happened and move beyond the dark past.”³ We resolve now to prioritize our pastoral ministry with Indigenous Catholics. We seek to accompany the Indigenous Peoples of this land in their faith through praying, listening, and seeking healing and reconciliation along the way, so that we can journey together toward the house of the heavenly Father. We affirm that this accompaniment should be intentional and mutual in identifying, forming, promoting, and developing Indigenous Catholic leadership—ordained and lay—in our communities, so that they are prepared to serve as missionary disciples and as leaders in the Catholic community. Finally, we hope that this Pastoral Framework will help local churches and the wider Catholic community in the United States to receive and appreciate the gift that Catholic Indigenous Peoples offer the Church and to be more attentive to their pastoral needs and concerns. May this document serve as the renewed welcome for Indigenous Catholics in the life of the Church.

Commentary:

The first part introduces the title of the document: “Keeping Christ’s Sacred Promise.” The title comes from the Acts of the Apostles 2:39. In this section of Acts, the Promise that is spoken of is the Holy Spirit. It is the power and authority of Christ that will be with the Apostles for their vocation of evangelization. The document is titled to do the same, to reference the Holy Spirit to our vocation of evangelization. Finally, the quote takes the work of evangelization and applies it

³ Pope Francis, Address, Meeting with Young People and Elders at a Primary School in Iqaluit, July 29, 2022, www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2022/july/documents/20220729-giovani-anziani-iqaluit.html.

to all cultures and all times, from one generation to the next and to those who you have not even conceived of being, those that are “far off”.

Although this is written primarily with Native voices and a Native narrative, it is still a Bishop’s document. It was passed by the bishops in the United States and has authority in every U.S. Diocese and Archdiocese. This is the voice of the bishops and therefore is what every bishop has agreed to carry out. The authority of the document is the authority of the Roman Catholic Church.

Why put the Saints in the introduction? The Native and non-Native Saints and holy individuals set the tone of the document. This tone is to ground us at the very beginning of the document on what it means to be holy.

Why put the importance of healing and reconciliation in the introduction?

Closing prayer:

From the Black and Indian Mission Office:

God of all nations and peoples. You have filled your creation with Your mighty presence. Through Your handiwork You speak to our hearts words that satisfy our every desire.

You called Your servant, the Mohawk maiden Saint Kateri Tekakwitha to embrace the Gospel of your Son Jesus Christ, to do Your will and to serve others with the gifts You gave her.

May she who held tight to the cross of Your Son throughout her short life marked by sickness, suffering, and persecution, be our intercessor during our own trials. May her embrace of the Catholic faith and her openness to sharing Jesus with others inspire us to be new evangelizers to all cultures and peoples. May she who sought our Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament lead up to similar reverences for

the Eucharist so that, like Saint Kateri, our last words may be, “Jesus, I love You.” Amen.

Church and Indian Country Podcast Questions:

Notice:

Although this was composed by Rev. Michael Carson, the USCCB and the Subcommittee on Native Americans is not responsible for the content. You may use any or all of the “Signpost” for the benefit of the Tekakwitha's Circles. This is only a suggested guide. Use what you find useful. Each addition has been reviewed by the Tekakwitha Executive Board. If you have any feedback on how the “Signposts” can be improved, I would love to hear from you at mcarson@usccb.org The Tekakwitha Conference holds the copyright.

Rev. Mike Carson