

## Signpost

Kateri Circles Vol. 6 Issue 6

## June 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:

Spring

East

Yellow

Sin/ Apathy, Sloth

Fruits of the Holy Spirit/ Faith/ Goodness /Modesty

Gifts of the Holy Spirit/ Understanding/ Piety/

### Topic:

**Pastoral Framework**

**Keeping Christ's Sacred Promise:  
A Pastoral Framework for Indigenous Ministry**  
UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

## Preface

Dear Friends in Christ,

We have developed this Pastoral Framework because as shepherds we have a sacred duty to ensure that Christ's promise is fulfilled in Catholic Indigenous communities. This framework develops a path forward in this vital ministry.

The bishops formally addressed Catholic Native Peoples in 1977 with the *Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on American Indians*. Since then, Catholic Native ministries and populations have experienced fundamental changes. In dialogue with Indigenous Catholic leaders, the Subcommittee on Native American Affairs of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has discerned the need for a new pastoral framework to address current realities and pastoral challenges. In consultation with the Standing Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church, the Subcommittee subsequently requested and obtained authorization from the USCCB General Assembly to draft a new Pastoral Framework for Native Ministry to come from the full body of bishops.

In serving Native communities in their respective dioceses, bishops often come to realize the importance of listening to the Elders and other Catholic Native leaders and recognizing the wisdom of the Holy Spirit speaking through them. These leaders, through example, have taught bishops and priests, and other ministers serving among them, the importance of both listening and patience. In keeping with this synodal spirit, on March 26 and 27, 2019, a listening session for bishops and Native leaders was held in Phoenix, Arizona. From this session was born a renewed commitment to listen more deeply, to reflect, and to put into motion the actions and recommendations emerging from these dialogues. 2

The Spirit of God is active, alive, and present in Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities. The Subcommittee on Native American Affairs is pleased to present this Pastoral Framework to offer guidance to bishops, pastors, religious, Catholic Native leaders, and others serving Indigenous communities. Native Indigenous Peoples do not just play an essential part of the Church's history in the Americas - they are a vital part of our present. Much of what these pages offer is the product of dialogues with Native Peoples and of our collective discernment regarding their pastoral needs and the actions needed to address them.

While unable to include the voice of every single tribe, as bishops, we want to express our appreciation for those Catholic Native leaders from various parts of the country who participated in the various forms of consultation. Heeding their advice, the contents of this framework are not meant as a comprehensive treatise of "all things Native American". The purpose of this document is to lift the major topics and concerns that emerged from those conversations, and to encourage local bishops to engage and deepen the dialogue with the local Native communities.

This document is written not just for the benefit of Catholic Native communities but for the benefit of the entire Church in the United States, as well. When the Church works with diverse cultural communities, the Church lives out being *one* and *catholic* at the same time, and it is better able to realize its mystical union with Christ. Therefore, the steps laid out in this Pastoral Framework seek to promote reconciliation and healing, proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, celebrate God's love for Indigenous Peoples and peoples of all cultures, and proclaim our unity in faith in the love of Christ. 3

Most Reverend Chad W. Zielinski  
Bishop of New Ulm  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Native American Affairs  
Most Rev. Arturo Cepeda  
Auxiliary Bishop of Detroit  
Chairman, Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church 4

*"The Gospel of Jesus Christ is at home in every people. It enriches, uplifts and purifies every culture. All of us together make up the People of God, the Body of Christ, the Church. We should all be grateful for the growing unity, presence, voice and leadership of Catholic Native Americans in the Church today."*

—*Saint John Paul II*

<sup>1</sup> Pope Saint John Paul II, *Address to the Native Peoples of the Americas, Phoenix, AZ, 1987*; [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1987/september/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_19870914\\_amerindi-phoenix.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1987/september/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19870914_amerindi-phoenix.html)

## 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 brothers and sisters. Despite a history of broken promises and failures to Indigenous populations<sup>2</sup> 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](https://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. 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

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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. 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,<sup>3</sup> <sup>3</sup> 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/> 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 6

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.

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.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> 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-iquait.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2022/july/documents/20220729-giovani-anziani-iquait.html).

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 gifts 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:**

In the introduction to the Pastoral Framework, Bishop Chad Zielinski sets it in the context of both time and relationships. The needs of Catholic Indigenous ministry are rooted in what Catholic Natives face in today’s world in the reality of ministry building a better Church. Not only does the introduction set the stage for the document, but it also frames in a context of a profound pastoral relationship between the Church and her Catholic Native communities. This relationship puts the focus on Native ministry as central to the Church and not a conjunction of it.

The introduction highlights the themes that are weaved throughout the document. Catholic Native ministry is unique but is central to the Church. The ministry is the responsibility of the whole Church, not just Natives themselves or missionaries. The ministry is centered on the profound joy of the Gospel. And as important as joy is, the Church must acknowledge and reconcile the sins of the past to embrace the future.

Further, in the introduction, Bishop Chad Zielinski focusses on who the audience is. There are two groups of people that the document tries to balance. The first group is written Catholic Natives themselves. It is a synthesis of six years of listening to the nation’s Catholic Native communities to not only their concerns, but also how they want to address those concerns. The document is a culmination of the common wisdom of our Catholic Native members and takes advantage of proclaiming that common wisdom to others in this ministry. The second audience is the Catholic Church as a whole. It is a document that seeks to inform and evangelize Catholics who may not be aware of this vibrant and important aspect of the Church in the United States. It is through this awareness, they may become not only better informed, but involved in all aspects of Catholic ministry.



Last, Bishop Zielinski stresses unity, but not just unity for the sake of unity. Unity in the vast richness that are Native cultures in the U.S. and within the Church. At the very start of the document, the emphasis is on the only way to celebrate our faith is through our diverse cultures. That the great tapestry of Native cultures is one of the very foundations of our faith and not a hindrance to it.

### **Questions from the Framework:**

- 1) How is unity expressed in your Parish/Community?
- 2) What concerns is your Catholic Native community facing? What are the answers to those concerns?
- 3) How is unity through diversity expressed in your parish or Tribal community?
- 4) How do I use the tools in the document to inform the wider Church community about Catholic Native ministry?

### **Church and Indian Country Podcast Questions: ICCI**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2KiS68CVNs&list=PLB3H0Nte7tMLQ0GIVfNjCitgmrEO-I3Qz&index=26>

Why is working together internationally important?

What are the common areas of concern for all Indigenous communities?

What are the differences?

What future topics would I like the International Catholic Conference on the Indigenous to address?

### **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.

**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 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](mailto:mcarson@usccb.org) The Tekakwitha Conference holds the copyright.

Rev. Mike Carson